

The Military Career of General Sir Henry
Brackenbury 1856-1904: The Thinking
Man's Soldier.

By Christopher Michael Brice

PhD Thesis

De Montfort University

April 2009

Contents Page

Abstract	i-ii
Acknowledgements	iii-iv
Introduction: General Sir Henry Brackenbury: The Thinking Man's Soldier	1-27
The Late Victorian British Army	28-66
The Product of an Intellectual Soldier: The literary work of Henry Brackenbury	67-101
Henry Brackenbury and the Franco-Prussian War: A unique perspective and account of the conflict	102-125
Service in the Field	126-167
The Intelligence Branch Under Sir Henry Brackenbury	168-207
An 'African' in India: Brackenbury as Military Member of the Council of the Viceroy	208-239
The Director General of the Ordnance and The South African War	240-298
Conclusion	299-312
Appendix 1 Timeline of the career of General Sir Henry Brackenbury	313-315
Appendix 2 List of books and articles by Sir Henry Brackenbury	316-319
Appendix 3 Pictures of Sir Henry Brackenbury	320-323
Bibliography	324-347

Abstract

This thesis deals with a largely forgotten soldier, writer and administrator of the mid to late Victorian era. General Sir Henry Brackenbury's career covered some forty-eight years. He was either directly involved in or was witness to all the major events of the British Army during this period, from the Crimean War to the South African War. His career encompassed an era of reform that saw the army move away from the military system of the Napoleonic Wars and the gradual establishment of the system with which the British Army would take the field in 1914.

The aim of this thesis is to look at the military career of Sir Henry Brackenbury, rather than be a biography of the man. However his literary career, personal life and financial circumstances are intrinsically linked to his life as a soldier. What this shows is a highly intelligent soldier, perhaps the first of a new breed of so-called 'Scientific Soldiers', men who studied and thought about their profession.

Apart from a considerable, and important, amount of active service overseas, Brackenbury held three key administrative positions, which were the highlight of his army service and allowed his talents to come to the fore. As Head of the Intelligence Branch at the War Office, Military Member of the Council of the Governor General of India, and Director General of the Ordnance, he ended his long career with powerful and important positions that brought much praise. Indeed his contemporaries considered him to be the most effective holder of these posts.

Brackenbury's career has not received the attention from historians which it deserves, largely due to the fact that he left no collection of private papers. What follows is the most detailed exploration of his contribution to the development of the British Army based on official government sources and documents for the production of which he was responsible, his published works and what remains of his correspondence with contemporaries.

Acknowledgements

Dr Anthony Clayton, formerly of the War Studies Department of The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, deserves foremost thanks for his help, support and advice throughout my studies. Originally serving as First Supervisor, he has continued to support me throughout the period of study despite no longer having an official interest. His advice and contacts have been invaluable, and I am extremely grateful to him. Professor Tony Mason, Professor Mike Cronin and Professor Richard Holt have at various times, and for various periods, been supervisors for this thesis. Professor Mason deserves particular thanks for helping to add new impetus to the study, and for guiding my progress, during his time as First Supervisor.

Being part-time I have also had to work and thanks must also go to my employers during this period, namely Mrs Diane Nicholson, Majors Chris and Mandy Sands of The Salvation Army, and Captains Mike and Sheila Smith, also of The Salvation Army, who have supported me and been understanding when it came to taking time off in connection with my studies.

I am also grateful to Professor Hew Strachan, Dr Stephen Badsey, Dr T.A. Heathcote, Brigadier B.A.H. Parritt and Mr Matthew Buck all of whom have offered their expert advice during my study. It has been much appreciated and very helpful.

Thanks must also go to the various archives that I have visited and had contact with. Firstly the staff of The National Archives at Kew, The British Library, The National Library of Scotland and the National Army Museum at Chelsea. Also Mr Andrew Orgil and the staff of The Central Library at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst provided much help in the early days of my study. Thanks must also go to Mr Paul Evans at the Royal Artillery Museum, Woolwich for his help and assistance regarding

the letter books of Sir Henry Brackenbury from his time in India. Also Zoë Lubowiecka at the Central Library, Hove for her assistance when going through the Wolseley Papers, and the staff of the Centre for Kentish Studies in Maidstone. Thanks must also go to Major Alan Edwards and the staff at the Military Intelligence Museum at Chicksands. Also Eliza Newton at the Devon Record Office in Exeter for help with the Buller Papers.

Finally I would like to thank my parents for their help and support during my studies, in particular my Father who at times has acted as ‘chauffeur’ and has also read through the large majority of the thesis for me.

Christopher Brice
April 2009

General Sir Henry Brackenbury: The Thinking Man's Soldier

Introduction

Major-General Lord Edward Gleichen told the following story about a meeting with the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge, when Gleichen was a young officer.

He (the Duke of Cambridge) very kindly asked me what I was doing, but when I had broken to him that I was working in the Intelligence Department he looked grave: and, leaning over and putting his hand on my knee, he said, "So you are under Brackenbury? A dangerous man, my dear Gleichen, a very dangerous man!"¹

As Gleichen went on to say, this was a curious thing for the Commander-in-Chief to say to a young subaltern about his chief. More than that, why did the Duke feel it his duty to warn a young officer serving under this 'dangerous' man? This has become an often-quoted remark about Brackenbury. It is interesting to compare this with Sir Garnet, later Lord, Wolseley's comment that Brackenbury was "not one of the cleverest, but the cleverest man in the British Army".² It could be argued that this was part of the reason why the Commander-in-Chief considered him dangerous.³ Yet there must have been far more to it than that. Gleichen himself could be called a man of 'brains', yet he seemed acceptable to the Commander-in-Chief. The difference was that Brackenbury was not only a thinker but also a reformer, and a radical one at that. Some of the reforms that Brackenbury supported would have destroyed the 'order' that the Duke of Cambridge championed. There was also a more personal point in that one of Brackenbury's key reforms was to abolish the office of Commander-in-Chief and replace him with a Chief of Staff. Brackenbury saw this as a key move in 'professionalising' the army. Many of his other reforms to this end would also have been unacceptable to the Commander-in-Chief. Indeed in some respects he could be called the most radical of Britain's military reformers in the late Victorian era.⁴ The problem was that to a large extent many of his reforms remained in the realm of

theory as he was never in a position to put them into practice. As a consequence the merit and effectiveness of these proposed reforms, which will be discussed in more detail later, is largely supposition.

The intention of this thesis is to examine the military career of a largely forgotten Victorian soldier who in many ways was unique amongst the British officer corps.⁵ Whereas the majority of his contemporaries made their reputations on the battlefields of the empire, Brackenbury made his in military administration and his literary career. The work that he did in the organisation of the various campaigns in the field and at the War Office has never truly been recognised, and rarely recorded. A brief synopsis of his career makes this hard to understand. He served in many of the key colonial wars of that period: the Indian Mutiny, the Ashanti Campaign, the Zulu War and the Gordon Relief expedition. He had two key War Office appointments, as Head of the Intelligence Branch and Director General of the Ordnance, and was generally accepted to have left both in a far better state than when first appointed. Indeed in both instances he entered departments in a state of some disarray. He also had two major semi-military appointments as Under Secretary for Police and Crime in Ireland and as the Military Member of the Council of the Viceroy of India. Added to this he also witnessed the Franco-Prussian War at close quarters when working for the National Aid Society providing medicine and stores to the sick and wounded of both sides. As a consequence he had probably the best view of the Franco-Prussian War of any Englishman. He saw both armies in operation, and because of the capacity in which he was serving was treated in a friendly and cordial manner and given full access to the military hierarchies of both combatant nations.⁶ In addition to this he had also developed a considerable reputation as a writer, largely, but interestingly not

exclusively, on military matters. His literary work was vital to his career advancement. It was a two-part article written for 'The Standard' that brought him to the attention of the founders of the National Aid Society. It was also his writing on army reform that introduced him to the leading military reformers of the day, both civilian and military, and in particular Garnet Wolseley. Given his lack of personal means his literary work also gave him some financial security. However, more importantly, it provided an importance and recognition beyond his military rank. His writing on military reform gave him a public profile that brought him to the attention of leading politicians, despite his being only a captain. It could well be said that for many of them he was probably the only officer of such rank who they could name, others than those they were either related to or knew personally. The significance of his writing is often lost. His series of articles on Army reform were written before, and in many cases anticipated, the Cardwell reforms. It was here that he advocated the creation of a General Staff nearly forty years before it was ultimately introduced. As we will see, many of his suggested changes would have been perceived as extremely radical at the time.

Yet despite these achievements he remains largely unknown, save for a select group of military historians. There are several reasons for this. First, he was largely a behind-the-scenes figure, and his most significant achievements were in the War Office rather than the battlefield. Second, the importance of the work he undertook has been overlooked, mostly because of the lack of importance attached to administration by generations of soldiers and civilians alike. His work, although vital, was unappreciated by the majority of his contemporaries. Such administrative work within the military was, and to an extent remains, unfashionable. It is interesting to

note that many of the Secretaries of State under whom he served were far more appreciative of his skills than his military contemporaries. However, gradually the importance of the behind the scenes work, which enables an army to take the field, started to be understood. To a large extent this happened after he had retired in 1904, but there were a few, both soldiers and civilians, who appreciated the vital and demanding work he had done from the War Office during the South African War, a conflict that perhaps started an appreciation of such work.

Perhaps the most important reason he is largely forgotten, however, is that unlike the majority of his contemporaries he left no cache of private papers that could be used by historians. What remains of his papers is a mixture of letters and official documents scattered amongst the archives of those with whom he had contact during his life. The reason for this lies partly with Brackenbury himself. When he retired he went to live in the south of France, but did not take any of his papers with him. Before his departure he donated those papers that were relevant to the India Office, and they survive today in the British Library's India and Oriental Studies section, and to the Royal Artillery Library. One period of his life that is covered extensively in what remains of his personal archive is the period between 1891 and 1896 when he was military member of the Council of the Viceroy of India. The British Library holds official documents and letters from this period, whilst the Royal Artillery Museum at Woolwich has his letter books. Added to this, and for obvious reasons, much of his correspondence with Lord Roberts, concerns his time in India and survives in the Roberts papers at the National Army Museum.

Unfortunately the majority of the surviving material concerns mostly official matters. It is very difficult to build a picture of the man rather than simply his work. The

material that helps the most in the personal respect are the letters to T.H.S Escott and to Wolseley. Especially in his letters to Wolseley we get an insight into his views on his work and his career. We can see some of the insecurity that he had, most significantly when it came to how others viewed him as a soldier. He felt that he was treated with suspicion, and this added to his insecurity and as a result he did not feel his skills were appreciated. He also tells Wolseley that he prefers promotion to honours, as a reward for serving in various campaigns. We see elements of his hypochondria, but also the way in which his practice of working would exhaust him to the point of breakdown.

This happened periodically, most notably on his return from the Franco-Prussian War, the Ashanti campaign, and the Gordon Relief expedition and during the South African War. Indeed the latter was the most significant. The severe strain that was placed upon him and the Ordnance Department led to a complete breakdown of his health, to the extent that he offered his resignation, but was persuaded to take a holiday instead. Brackenbury's working pattern was based on long days and very late nights.⁷ The problem was that by the time of the South African War he was in his early sixties, the years of such hard work were taking their toll, and he became very anxious about his ability to carry on. Consequently he was finding that what little sleep he had was fitful and brief. Brackenbury was not alone in this respect, as there were a number of officers who experienced nervous breakdowns within the department during the conflict, due to the fact that the demands on it were entirely unexpected. Yet on the head of the department the pressure and responsibility was obviously greater.

One has to be careful when examining the letters of Wolseley. They have their value,

but often have to be examined for deeper motives. Most of these letters were to Lady Wolseley. She appears to have enjoyed gossip and her husband seems to have indulged her by keeping her fully informed. As a consequence it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between gossip and fact. Also, Wolseley was very much a man of moods. Even a brief look at Wolseley's campaign journals illustrates that his opinion of his staff changed from day to day. His praise could quickly turn to vitriolic condemnation. His Sudan journal best illustrates this. By this time the decline in Wolseley's physical and mental health was starting to manifest itself. He was also troubled in this campaign by the fact that his staff were now senior officers and he was no longer able to control them as he had in the past. On one page he describes Brackenbury as being hated throughout the army in the Sudan and generally condemns his leadership, but in the next entry an attack on the character of Buller leads Wolseley to say that on his next campaign he will have Brackenbury as his Chief of Staff, praising his leadership quality, and saying that Brackenbury is one of only two men worth employing again. On one occasion Wolseley criticises Brackenbury for complaining about being forced to serve under officers junior to him during the Gordon relief expedition. Wolseley continued: "If in my career I had refused to serve under a junior, I wonder where I should have been?", conveniently forgetting that he had never been in that position. The Wolseley papers and journals are useful and interesting but their limitations should always be remembered. Again in this instance it is unfortunate that Brackenbury's personal recollection of events has not survived. It would have been very interesting to have compared them with Wolseley's. To a similar extent the correspondence with T.H. Escott has a similar bias. Escott and Brackenbury were close friends and this obviously influenced his judgement. This is illustrated in Escott's article 'Henry Brackenbury and his school'.

It is an interesting tribute to Brackenbury but does not even attempt to look at his faults or failings.⁸

An interesting archive is the letters he wrote to Lord Spencer whilst serving in Ireland.⁹ Here we get a good picture of his mind and administrative skills at work. We see the formulation of his plans to deal with the Fenian threat, and how he recommends the creation of a sophisticated intelligence network. We also see in these letters the incredulity he felt when his plans were not adopted. Here we also see his lack of ability to play the political game and to realise that he was in a highly politicised position and environment. This is one of the best archives that shows how he worked, rather than simply the product of his work.

Another archive that gives some valuable insights into Brackenbury's thinking can be found in his letters to Edward Stanhope, when the latter was Secretary of State for War between January 1887 and August 1892. Stanhope and Brackenbury knew each other before their time together at the War Office. The full extent of this relationship is unclear, but we do know that Stanhope had been sufficiently impressed by Brackenbury to ask him to become the chief political and election agent for the Conservative party. Their friendship meant that Brackenbury was extremely open in his letters to Stanhope. In them we get a picture of Brackenbury's insecurity and concern about his future. He seems to have had a real fear that once his time as Head of the Intelligence Branch was over he would simply not be given another appointment. This is extremely interesting given that to the outside observer it would have appeared that Brackenbury's star was in the ascendance. Perhaps partly a recognition that he had lost Wolseley's patronage, and also that he had made many enemies, it is still surprising that he felt so insecure about his future.

The relationship between Lord Roberts and Brackenbury will be looked at in more detail later, but their friendship and work together have left an interesting account of Brackenbury's career. Despite being in many ways the protégé of Roberts' great rival Wolseley, Brackenbury does seem to have been deeply respected by Roberts. There is a warmth and friendliness in the letters that is missing in the Wolseley papers.

Perhaps key in this was the fact that Roberts would ask for Brackenbury's advice, something that Wolseley never did. Roberts correspondence with Brackenbury starts when the latter was at the Intelligence Branch. Obviously it is at its greatest during the time they served together in India, but it continues after Roberts is replaced by White, through the South African War and even into Brackenbury's retirement.¹⁰

Perhaps this highlights a key problem with the historiography regarding Brackenbury. Due to his close links with Wolseley the large majority of references to Brackenbury come straight from the former. As has already been explained this in itself is something of a problem, given the nature of Wolseley's account. However it misses the point that Brackenbury was far more than just one of the 'ring'. His career brought him into a close working relationship with Roberts and many leading politicians of the day. Indeed he was closer, and worked closer, with Roberts, Stanhope and Lansdowne in particular, than he ever did with Wolseley. One of the key aims of this thesis is to illustrate his career away from Wolseley. Although Brackenbury was dependent upon Wolseley's patronage in the early days his later career owed little to his influence. His three key administrative appointments towards the end of his career owed much more to political intervention and Brackenbury's persistence than Wolseley's influence. Certainly whenever historians have written about Wolseley and his exploits the name of Brackenbury has not been far away, but to get a fuller picture

of Brackenbury it is necessary to move beyond his association with Wolseley and the ring. The problem is the lack of Brackenbury's own papers. As a consequence this study has tried to cover all the other available sources. Looking at the papers of people such as Roberts, Campbell-Bannerman, Arnold-Forster, Escott, Stanhope, Buller and others has allowed for a much wider view than the tradition Wolseley centric view of Brackenbury to be reached.

However this has caused some problems, as many of his contemporaries archives have not survived either. One of the closest people to Brackenbury was the future Lieutenant General Sir James Grierson, but unfortunately his papers have not survived. The Grierson diaries would have been extremely useful, as he was probably closer to him than any other officer. Unfortunately those who were closest to Brackenbury were the officers who served under him at the Intelligence Branch, and given the nature of their work they obviously recorded little at the time. Much more useful in this respect are their autobiographies. Many other accounts of his contemporaries have only brief mention of Brackenbury. Yet they all help to create a more complete account of his career. The aim is to move beyond the narrow view of Brackenbury that exists in what little has been written about him, and put his whole career in its wider context rather than merely his association with Wolseley and the 'ring'.

Henry Brackenbury was born into a minor landowning family in Lincolnshire on 1st September 1837. The family had played an important part in Lincolnshire society, and contributed many members to the church and the legal profession within the county. As he was the youngest son of a youngest son it was reasonable to expect that he would probably have been sent into the army as a career. The likelihood was

increased by the fact that both his father and an uncle were Peninsular War veterans, and two of his three brothers joined the army, so that something of a military tradition seems to have been established in the family. Yet Brackenbury himself seems not to have intended to join the Army and had been set up by his family in a notary's office in Quebec.¹¹ It is likely that these years in a business atmosphere did something to influence his professional approach to his later military life. It also gave him experience of another world that many officers did not have. His exact reasons for joining the army are uncertain. However, what is known is that he had already had a brief military experience whilst in Canada where he had served as an ensign in the Seventh Battalion of the Quebec Militia.

Added to which he had a lifelong friendly rivalry with his brother Charles, who was already serving in the Royal Artillery. It may well have been a desire to emulate his brother, particularly as the latter was currently seeing active service in the Crimean War, which clinched the decision. It seems to be generally agreed that it was only at this point that Brackenbury really settled down to work and started to appreciate the skills he had towards administration. Brackenbury entered the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich as a 'gentleman cadet' in 1855 and on the strength of his previous commission in Quebec was appointed Senior Under Officer, although Brackenbury admitted that at that point, "...my only military knowledge was what I had gained on the strength of one muster parade".¹² His commissioning was rushed through, and it has been said that he had not completed all the necessary courses, but with the demand for artillery officers created by the Crimean War he and others were commissioned early.¹³ In April 1856 he was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery. In late June his company were ordered to Plymouth to take up garrison artillery duties. He was soon acting as Adjutant for the Royal Artillery in the

western district, and it was from here that he obtained service in the forces being prepared to go to India to quell the mutiny. In India the young subaltern learnt an early lesson in the perils of not having the correct equipment. The men of his company, like other artillery companies, had not been issued with helmets, to keep the sun off. Their only head gear was forage caps with white cap covers. As a result his battery lost 20% of their officers and men “from solar apoplexy”.¹⁴ This led him to think about the importance of planning and preparation and had a lasting impact on him. It may also explain why during the South African War, when he was Director General of Ordnance, he insisted, to the point of obsession, that all equipment was to a standard that would withstand the climatic conditions.

A curious event happened in 1860 when Brackenbury was offered the post of Adjutant of the Brigade on the condition that he give up cricket. Brackenbury had represented the Royal Artillery on several occasions and had developed a good reputation as a wicketkeeper-batsman. However, the previous adjutant had also been a cricketer and had as a consequence not performed his duties to the required level. Brackenbury, in his own words, “elected for work in preference to play” and for the next two years played no cricket.¹⁵ This was an important event and shows the level to which Brackenbury had grown up and intended to make the army his career, and that he saw work as being more important than sport especially when in a position of responsibility.¹⁶ The majority of officers of the day would more likely have elected for play over work. Although much has been written about the social attitudes of the officer corps during this period one of the more recent contributions puts it most succinctly.

For most British officers the acquisition of a commission represented a stage in the life of a 'gentleman', not a long-term commitment, and its main importance was a confirmer of social status.¹⁷

Although it could be argued that Brackenbury's social status meant he had little choice other than to make the army his career, this would be to ignore the fact that he did have other job offers both in politics and the city. His decision was an early indication that Brackenbury was a different style of officer and in many ways bucked the trend of the officer corps at that time. From 1862-1864 he was Lieutenant of a company of gentleman cadets at the Royal Military Academy Woolwich. At the end of this appointment he became Assistant-Instructor in Artillery, also at Woolwich. It was at this time that he commenced his literary career. This undoubtedly helped his case when in the summer of 1868 he applied for the newly created appointment of Professor of Military History at Woolwich. Within this position his literary work expanded as he found that material gathered for his lectures could be revised and published. Battlefield tours during the vacations, mostly on the continent and occasionally accompanied by students, led to several articles being published. His literary career will be looked at in more detail later.

Henry Brackenbury was once described as "a scientific soldier at the dawn of scientific soldiering".¹⁸ This is a very pertinent comment that raises several points. In some respects he could be said to be 'before his time'. Had he been born twenty years later he would have been more in tune with prevailing military attitudes and would most likely have been the Chief of Staff that he had so long campaigned for, although, questioning of this style ignores the fact that his advancement was due to the circumstances of the time, because there was a wider movement for army reform, with which he could associate. He also benefited from the patronage of Lord

Wolseley. Also because in some ways he was the first of a new breed or at least style of officer he became, and indeed made himself, a focal point for like-minded young officers when he was Head of the Intelligence Branch. It could be said that the Intelligence Branch during this era was the closest thing the British Army had to a General Staff. This was not simply because of the duties that it undertook. Under Brackenbury in particular it attracted, and indeed sought out, the capable young officers of the Army who in European nations would have formed the General Staff. In many respects the Intelligence Branch under Brackenbury was a training ground for such officers.

Indeed it was here that many of the senior figures of the War Office during the First World War gained that initial training. Amongst the junior officers he chose for the department were two future field marshals, a future Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and five major-generals. Not only does this show the quality of men he selected but it perhaps lends weight to the argument that the quality of such types of officer was starting to be understood. Brackenbury was also in a way a champion of the graduates of the Staff College, despite his never having attended it. Although there were obvious exceptions, such as Edward Gleichen, who had proved his worth when serving under Brackenbury in the River Campaign in the Sudan, within a year of Brackenbury's appointment at the Intelligence Branch there were thirteen officers either attached or permanent who were Staff College graduates.¹⁹ All those who served under him during this period had great respect for him. The relationship worked both ways. If Brackenbury were ever to be Chief of Staff these were the men who would serve under him. On the other hand they saw him as a patron who would assist their military advancement, and also one of the few senior officers with whom their particular administrative talents were recognised for their importance. In their

many autobiographies all of them commented upon his devotion, hard work, and professional manner. The work this department did will be looked at in more detail later, but suffice it to say that Brackenbury's achievements there were significant. Not least because he, supported by Wolseley as Adjutant-General and Stanhope as Secretary of State for War, managed to create the political and military will to gather such a group of like-minded intellectual officers together and make it into a key hub of the War Office. However, the practice of appointing people to the War Office on the back of military achievements in the field would remain a problem for many years to come.²⁰

The one thing all those who worked under him commented upon was his hard work and highly professional manner. He turned all the offices he worked in, whether in the War Office or throughout the empire, into professional well run going concerns. The words 'professional' and 'businesslike' were still something of an insult in the army of this period. The future Lord Kitchener was once called a 'professional soldier', and this was clearly intended as an insult; if you were professional you were probably not a gentleman. This is part of a much wider discussion about the professionalisation of late Victorian society, which is largely beyond the scope of this thesis, which in turn forms part of a wider debate about the army and the merits of 'brains' versus 'breeding', to use the words of the Duke of Cambridge. Cambridge was sometimes seen as holding back the professional development of the army. Often called a 'bow and arrow' general, his time as Commander-in-Chief was a period of several contradictions. He was a keen advocate of social status as the method of officer selection and generally opposed many of the Cardwell reforms which aimed to alter the conditions and mentality of the army. On the other hand he was also an advocate

of the Staff College and had worked to overcome opposition to its reestablishment. He also advocated many of the developments in military technology that happened during his time in office. Although one of the Cardwell reforms had been the abolition of the system of purchasing commissions in the army, thus removing one of the major financial limitations on a military career, the fact remained that the social composition of the officer corps changed little until after the First World War. The social position and the high cost of being an officer meant that an officer's pay was never enough and that the majority of officers were dependent upon a private income. It was in such an atmosphere that Brackenbury found himself trying to advance professional ideas and ideals. Brackenbury had no private income of any substance and it was his writing that was the key to his ability to maintain a military career. Although joining the army before the abolition of purchase, Brackenbury never had to purchase a commission as officers of the Royal Artillery, and Royal Engineers, were not covered by the system.²¹ Still he had to maintain the 'lifestyle' of an officer and with no real private income his situation was difficult. This was someone who came from a minor landowning family so the problem for the middle classes is self-evident.

His problem of finance was partly solved by his writing, which was almost a full-time occupation on occasions. He also made a financially motivated marriage. Whilst his private life is not entirely relevant to his military career a few comments are necessary. His first wife Emilia was ten years his senior and a widow. If there ever had been a motivation other than money any such feelings soon disappeared, and much of their marriage was spent separated, although they never divorced, as a divorcee could not hold a Queen's Commission. The majority of the detail about Brackenbury's private life comes from the papers of Lord and Lady Wolseley and the problem here is to differentiate between the gossip and fact. Brackenbury does appear

to have had several affairs.²² Only two are known for sure. Firstly, whilst in South Africa, he had an affair, which was to say the least dangerous. The lady in question was not only married but to the son of the chief political agent in Natal, a man who had proved himself in action and was according to Wolseley a 'crack shot'. Wolseley took measures to get Brackenbury out of the way as quickly as possible. However, it is interesting to note from his correspondence with Lady Wolseley that whilst he did not condone the affair he said that he could understand it having met Mrs Brackenbury.²³ Wolseley also comments on a relationship Brackenbury had with a woman in France. Although not entirely clear, this is likely to have been Edith Desanges who in 1905 became the second Mrs Brackenbury shortly after the death of Emilia. There was no issue from either marriage, and consequently there are no direct descendants of Henry Brackenbury. This in itself has caused a problem as it is commonly the descendants who keep the memory alive, and this is another factor in understanding why so little has been written about Henry Brackenbury. Having said that, it is interesting to note that no account of the life of Charles Brackenbury exists, despite the fact that he had nine children. Although Charles did not reach the heights that his brother did it is surprising that nothing has been written about him given that he had vast experience of witnessing European wars. Perhaps this points to a wider reason for the failure to record the lives of the brothers, that is not immediately clear.

Although he could be considered a consummate professional Brackenbury's ideas about soldiering have been called into question. Ian Hamilton, who was a friend of Brackenbury's, criticised him for "hating" soldiers. "On paper he appreciated them well; that is to say he wrote what military instructors barbarously call 'appreciations' about them, but Brackenbury, the real Brackenbury, hated them in practice".²⁴ Not

only is this an unusual criticism but also it is hard to understand what point Hamilton was trying to make. His motivation here, as in the rest of the same chapter, was to criticise Wolseley for his selection of officers and his conduct of the Gordon Relief expedition. If Hamilton was trying to say that Brackenbury did not care for them that is hard to support in the light of his writing on military reform, much of which, if carried out, would dramatically improve the life of the average soldier. It must be added that Brackenbury's primary motivation was to improve efficiency and aid recruitment. However, Brackenbury did not have much experience in dealing with ordinary soldiers. His career was largely based around dealing with officers and in the brief times in his early career that he had commanded soldiers they were artillerymen rather than infantry. The artillery was a very different organisation to the rest of the army as a degree of specialism was required, and if as a result Brackenbury was unsure of how to deal with ordinary soldiers then that is to a large extent understandable. Another key phrase is Hamilton's reference to military instructors and it is no coincidence that this was Brackenbury's background. If, however, Hamilton is suggesting he did not care about the welfare of his men then the point is harder to support. Brackenbury's very nature would have meant that he did not show much concern, but that did not mean that he did not care. His lack of experience of dealing with other ranks probably meant that he did not always understand how best to handle them. Yet this was not the type of soldier Brackenbury was. He had ambitions to be a field commander and had shown he was more than capable but this was not where his talents lay. Indeed perhaps his most useful position was not to be at the seat of war but at the War Office where, as an administrator, he could organise and plan campaigns. The fact that this was not appreciated says a lot about the army of that time. Ideals about soldiering centred on romantic notions of the battlefield.

Thomas Pakenham gives a good example of how this worked.

If help didn't come, Jameson and his officers well knew what England expected of them. This was the moment they had been trained for ever since boyhood. It was a picture of the last stand above the fireplace in the schoolroom and the mess and the rectory. The Gatling has jammed: the Colonel, eyes uplifted, grasps his sword; the little band sings 'God Save the Queen'; and, one, by one, they fall.²⁵

Although an exaggeration of a stereotype, this illustrates the perceived 'glamour' of the battlefield. In the 'small wars' of Empire with which the British Army found itself preoccupied during this period, the brave heroic stand was a powerful image. In almost every campaign the British forces would be outnumbered, although they would almost always have technical and material superiority over their adversaries. This was the place to be for career advancement, and perhaps explains a great deal about why Brackenbury has been largely forgotten. There was, and to an extent still is, a lack of 'glamour' about staff work even though it is vital to allow an army to take the field.

The folly of this attitude was partly realised during the South African War when the ad hoc staff arrangements were wholly inadequate for the demands of the conflict. Most of the staff was selected purely because of their availability and few had met before let alone served together. This arrangement led the author of 'The Times History of the South African War' to comment:

Englishmen, who would not dream of sending a crew to Henley Regatta whose members had never rowed together before, were quite content that a general's staff should be hastily improvised at the last moment from officers scraped together from every corner.²⁶

The fact that this situation existed was largely the fault of the army itself. It was the army that had really scuppered the creation of a General Staff, which the Hartington Commission of 1890 had recommended.²⁷ Partly this was due to traditional attitudes amongst the army hierarchy, but also because the main advocate of professional staff

work, Lord Wolseley, opposed the idea for purely selfish reasons.

An interesting view on his career was given by Brackenbury in February 1883 when he wrote to Wolseley:

Never yet have I been offered even the humblest employment on the staff in England – never once have I been asked to serve on a committee or commission, or in any way whatever to help in the work of organisation and administration of the army.²⁸

It seems rather ironic that a man who wanted such work and had proved he could do it was overlooked for men who would much rather have seen service in the field. His liking for management was largely due to his professional background to work, but also because of his educational background. The years he had spent teaching at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich as Professor of Military History had set his mind to studying his profession more seriously than most, and it was at this time that his literary output was at its most prestigious. Wolseley praised him for administrative work on many occasions. Perhaps more significant was the praise he received from several Secretaries of State for War. Indeed the individual who seemed the most aggrieved by Brackenbury's omission from the honours list for the South African War was the Secretary of State for War, H.O Arnold-Forster. His position is understandable. Brackenbury was one of the few men to come out of the South African War with any credit, yet it was never officially recognised.

Henry Brackenbury seems to have been a slightly unusually character in some ways. That he often appeared aloof, superior, condescending and arrogant is probably true but these were hardly unique characteristics for a Victorian army officer. Indeed this might have been part of the 'disguise' he used to make himself seem acceptable to his fellow officers. Yet his supposed arrogance might often have been self-confidence.

However he was certainly able to realise his own limitations. There had been some suggestions that Brackenbury might be the man to succeed Roberts as Commander-in-Chief in India. In a very frank and honest letter to Lord Lansdowne Brackenbury rejected the idea in self-deprecating terms. Speaking of himself he said,

Lieutenant-General Brackenbury does not possess in a high degree the qualities required in a Commander-in-Chief. He is unknown to the Indian Army. He has not the gift of attaching soldiers to him, which is possessed by Lord Roberts and Sir George White. He has no practical knowledge of the Indian Army. He is an indifferent horseman. He has been for the last seven years dissociated from the command of troops. His appointment could therefore only be considered as affording a possible, though by no means satisfactory solution of a very difficult problem.²⁹

Although a highly intelligent and professional man Brackenbury adopted what has been called a 'silly ass' manner. He developed a 'haw haw' laugh, much to Wolseley's annoyance. Perhaps most incomprehensible was his affectation of a lisp, a common practice at the time in the fashionable regiments, which meant his own name became 'Whackenbaywe'.³⁰ All of this can be seen as part of his attempt to be accepted and was almost a disguise for the unacceptable nature of his professionalism. Given that he joined the Crimean era army the use of such mannerisms is perhaps more understandable. Clinging to the fashions of the day would have given him a certain security and acceptability that his professionalism would not have secured alone. It might also have made people believe that he was of slightly higher social status than he indeed was.

For whatever reason he appears to have been difficult to like personally, but even those who disliked him would admit admiration for his work. He had an ability to rub people up the wrong way. Sir George White, for instance, claimed that Brackenbury was an "intriguer" who tried "...to turn everything to his own credit".³¹ In a sense it was inevitable that Brackenbury would gain some credit for all things done in the

Indian Army, as he was ultimately the senior man, and in theory White's 'boss'. It would be interesting to know if White realised that Brackenbury had championed his claim to be Commander-in-Chief in India, despite his juniority, and had written to both Stanhope, as Secretary of State for War, and Lord Lansdowne as Viceroy, in his favour. Indeed in both letters he said White was the only option. So whatever view White had of Brackenbury it did not affect Brackenbury's view of White. Whilst there are other examples of this ability to rub people up the wrong way, including his actions towards the government during his time in Ireland, there is however no record of anyone criticising or denigrating his work or professionalism.³²

The idea that he was hard to get to know and generally disliked is contradicted by his time in the Intelligence Branch where the officers serving under him were full of praise and genuinely liked him. It can be argued that this was because he had surrounded himself with likeminded officers and for perhaps the first time in his military career could genuinely be himself. It is clear that Brackenbury felt a pressure on himself to prove that he was more than a teacher or thinker. In the same way he felt himself pressured to prove that he was 'an officer and a gentleman' rather than a 'professional'. He had an uneasy relationship with politicians, although he got on well with a good many. The problem was Brackenbury's lack of tact and unwillingness to play the political game. His view was simple, if not arrogant. He was the expert, and if he said something needed to be done then it was their duty to make sure that he was able to carry it out. This was certainly the case with Ireland and his time as Director General of the Ordnance. He was slightly more tactful when Head of the Intelligence Branch. This was perhaps due to the fact that the conflict he had in Ireland with his political masters was still fresh in his memory. The other reason

might be that in this latter case he had the full support of Wolseley and Stanhope who would play the political game for him.

Brackenbury entered the army at an important time. The army had been called upon to undertake two major operations, the war in the Crimea and the mutiny in India, within a short space of time. In particular the Crimean War showed up the inadequacies and inefficiencies of the military machine in all its aspects. Indeed, the situation was such that a major overhaul of the military system was undertaken whilst the war was still being fought. Whilst these reforms simplified the situation they were only part of what was needed. Thus there was a continuing interest in reforming the army. At the time Brackenbury started writing in the mid-1860s parliamentary interest in army reform was growing though never could it be said that it was considered to be a high priority. The Cardwell reforms did not come out of nowhere and the previous Conservative government, who had never had time before the election of 1868 to carry them through, had proposed several of them. As can be seen as Brackenbury's career advanced he was often in the right place at the right time. His entry to the army and commencement of his literary career coincided with moves in the direction of reform. An interesting question would be whether the events of the time turned Brackenbury into a reformer or whether he helped to set the agenda of reform. The lack of private papers is a problem in this regard as we do not know what Brackenbury's thinking and motivations were at the time.

As has already been said, the intention of this thesis is to explore, in a detail never attempted before, the military career of Sir Henry Brackenbury. The work begins with a brief look at the late Victorian army in order to provide essential background for the study and to explain the nature of the organisation of which Brackenbury was a

member. It is not intended to be a detailed look at this period in the British Army's history. A vital part of his life was his literary work, and a chapter has been included that looks at the nature of this work, the type of publications he wrote for and the significance of his writing. An examination will also be made of his work for the National Aid Society during the Franco-Prussian War. Whilst this might not be considered to be part of his military career it was undoubtedly a very significant event and would have considerable impact on his own later military career. It also gave him a degree of public attention which would further both his literary and military career. The aim here is to examine a unique perspective on the conflict rather than the conflict itself. We then move on to look at his active service career. This covers the years from 1873-1886 which Brackenbury spent largely overseas in a number of short-term positions. Whilst the term "service in the field" is used for this chapter there are perhaps some appointments which do not quite fall into this category but are included here because, though significant, they do not warrant a chapter in their own right. In Ireland it could be argued that although his appointment was a civilian one it warrants inclusion, as he was convinced to take up the appointment by being told by the government that it was "war in Ireland". Although his work in Cyprus was largely civilian orientated he was serving as part of a military administration of the island. It is only really his appointment as military attaché in Paris and the various home appointments that he had which cannot be truly called service in the field. They are, however, important parts of his career but the sources do not exist to enable individual chapters to be written. He had a very significant active service career which would have been the envy of many of his contemporaries. It was on such expeditions that fame, glory and more importantly promotion could be found. It is worth noting that despite many years of good administrative work he

received his first War Office appointment on the back of his service in the field in the Sudan in 1885. So by the time he finally entered the War Office he was in fact a Major General. There was another important factor to his active service career. It meant that he could not be called ‘an armchair general’ or be seen as purely a teacher or theorist. It undoubtedly helped in his later administrative appointments that he had experience of service in the field. The remainder of the thesis focuses on the three key appointments he undertook towards the end of his career; the Head of the Intelligence Branch, the Military Member of the Council of the Viceroy of India, and Director General of the Ordnance. This moved him into the hierarchy of the army and allowed him the opportunity to put into practice some of the ‘theories’ he had expounded in his literary career.

The thesis intends to look at the military career of a forgotten but extremely significant Victorian soldier. Through examining his career we see the way in which the late Victorian army reacted to change and was changed during a period of continual reform. We also see the rise in professionalism within the army officer corps. Although it is not the aim of this thesis to enter into the debate over when the British Army became truly professional, we can see through the life of Brackenbury that things were beginning to change. Although other generals of the period such as Wolseley, Kitchener and Roberts were undoubtedly professionals they were of a different type.³³ Brackenbury could be called an intellectual soldier. His literary career demonstrates the amount of time and thought he put into so many areas of his profession as well as his concern about the fighting efficiency of the army.

Brackenbury was unique in combining a significant literary career with active service and key administrative appointments at the highest level of the British Army. No other soldier compared in this respect and through looking at his career we gain a

different perspective on the British Army than that provided by other scholars. There is also the matter of the sheer length of his career, spanning some forty-eight years, encompassed the large majority of the Victorian era, which means that he is a key witness to the period.³⁴ However, what is more important than the length of his career is what he was able to achieve during it. From a subaltern in the Royal Artillery he moved on to a significant active service career before ending his military service with three major administrative appointments. Through using a much broader set of archives than has ever been used before we are able to place Henry Brackenbury in his correct context, and illustrates his importance within the army and the state during this period. The aim is to move away from the narrow view of his association with Wolseley to illustrate the career of a significant officer of the late Victorian army and to place his career in its correct context.

Notes

¹ Gleichen, Major Lord Edward Gleichen *A Guardsman's Memories* (London: William Blackwood, 1932), p.142. The Duke of Cambridge also told Edward Stanhope, Secretary of State for war at the time, that Brackenbury was a dangerous man to have in the War Office. See Duke of Cambridge to Edward Stanhope 30th July 1887, Stanhope Papers, Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone.

² Maurice, Sir Frederick & Arthur, Sir George *The Life of Lord Wolseley* (London: William Heinemann, 1924), pp.223-4.

³ The Duke of Cambridge is alleged to have said that he preferred "Breeding rather than brains" when it came to army officers. This concept is supported by Wolseley's comments that "H.R.H would prefer nonentities belonging to his own club, men socially agreeable to him and his own set".

⁴ Certainly his idea, mentioned in his articles for 'Fraser's Magazine' on Army Reform, that every fifth officers commission should be given to someone from the ranks would have been too radical for many of his contemporaries.

⁵ It would be unfair not to recognise the few attempts to chronicle Brackenbury's life that have been made. Foremost is Ian Harvie's 'A Very Dangerous Man', which appeared in Issue 96 of *Soldiers of the Queen*. Two thorough reports of his life have been made for the Dictionary of National Biography, the most recent by Ian Beckett.

⁶ Because of his service in this capacity he became, as far as I am aware, the only man to be decorated with both the German Iron Cross and the French Legion of Honour

⁷ In *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pages 51-52. Brackenbury talks of having discussed his working practice with the author Anthony Trollope, who was a close friend. Trollope believed in working from five o'clock in the morning, and not working after breakfast. He told Brackenbury that, "I give the freshest hours of the day to my work; you give the fag end of the day to yours".

⁸ T.H.Escott Papers, British Library Add58775 & Escott, T.H. S 'Henry Brackenbury and his school' *Contemporary Reviews* 105 (January/June 1914).

⁹ Brackenbury correspondence with 5th Earl Spencer, Spencer papers, British Library. Add 77088.

¹⁰ Roberts Papers National Army Museum R11/42. Brackenbury's correspondence with Roberts covers the period from 1886 to 1910.

¹¹ Mr Archibald Campbell, Her Majesty's Notary at Quebec, was the father in law of Charles Brackenbury, Henry's brother. At the time of Henry's appointment they were however only engaged to be married, marrying the following year, in 1854.

¹² Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909), p.2.

¹³ Although the fighting in the Crimean War had ended in 1855 the war did not technically end until March 1856 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris

¹⁴ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.11-12.

¹⁵ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.17. After this appointment ended he did once again take up cricket.

¹⁶ In later years Brackenbury would renew his sporting interests. A clear pattern can be seen between the importance of his position and the amount of sport he played.

¹⁷ Searle, G.R *A New England? Peace and War 1886-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.255. Although slightly dated Harries-Jenkins, Gwyn *The Army in Victorian Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), has several chapters devoted to the officer corps. This suffers slightly from being a work of sociology rather than history. E.M Spiers *The Army and Society 1815-1914* (London: Longmans, 1980) is a more rounded account.

¹⁸ Macdiarmid, D.S *The Life of Lieutenant-General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson* (London: Constable & Company Ltd, 1923), p.63.

¹⁹ That is to say they were P.S.C's, which simply stood for Passed Staff College.

²⁰ The practice continued well into the 20th Century. Indeed the continuance of such a policy led to Field-Marshal Montgomery's famous comment that due to the practice of appointing men who had distinguished themselves in World War One, "the Army entered the Second World War in 1939 admirably organised and equipped to fight the 1914 war".

²¹ The theory was that officers in these branches, the so-called scientific services, had to have an element of professionalism and training.

²² A quote of Wolseley is often used to suggest that Brackenbury was an ugly man. This led to Byron Farwell christening him in his books the 'Ugly but brilliant Brackenbury'. Having read the original source I do feel this may be a misreading of the passage in question. Rather than the man I believe Wolseley is referring to Brackenbury's moustache. This was a feature that Wolseley would comment upon later. Regardless of his supposed 'ugliness' he does seem to have been reasonably successful with the ladies for one reason or another.

²³ Garnet Wolseley to Mrs Wolseley 22nd June 1875. Wolseley Papers, Central Library, Hove.

²⁴ Hamilton, Ian *Listening for the Drums* (London: Faber & Faber, 1944), pp.179-180.

²⁵ Pakenham, Thomas *The Boer War* (London: Abacus Books, 1992), p.4.

²⁶ Amery, Leo *The Times History of the War in South Africa Volume II* (London: Smith Elder & Co, 1902), pp.37-8.

²⁷ Although the Government, as a way out, used the dissention from the Commission's report by Campbell-Bannerman, this might not have mattered had the military been squarely behind the report.

²⁸ Brackenbury to Wolseley 4th February 1883. Wolseley Papers, Central Library, Hove.

²⁹ Brackenbury to Buller 'Confidential Memorandum 19th July 1892' Buller Papers, Devon Records Office, Exeter.

³⁰ Brackenbury, Charles, E *The Brackenburys of Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1983), p.69.

³¹ Sir George White to John White 7th April 1898, White papers, British Library P3/132.

³² Another criticism of Brackenbury can be found in General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien autobiography. Brackenbury had made a speech in which he had apparently questioned the value of the Staff College certificate. Unfortunately the speech does not appear to have survived anywhere, and Smith-Dorrien gives few details. What is unfair however is Smith-Dorrien's attempt to make Brackenbury appear to be one of the conservatives of the army resistant to change, which illustrates a complete ignorance on his part of Brackenbury's career. It is also contrary to Smith-Dorrien's own statement about the Staff College that, "I do not think we were taught as much as we might have been, but there was plenty of sport and not too much work". Brian Bond says of Smith-Dorrien's time at the Staff College that, "Legend says that after he had been there three months he was found wandering about the corridors asking the way to the library!". Bond, Brian *The Victorian Army and the Staff College* (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd, 1972), p.141.

³³ It is worthy of note that all four generals were sons of army officers.

³⁴ For simplicity the date of April 1856, when he was first commissioned as a Lieutenant, is used for the start of his Army career. It could be argued that 1855, when he first entered Woolwich, or 1853, when he was made an Ensign in the Quebec Militia, could be used.

The Late Victorian British Army

Introduction

In military terms the dates for the late Victorian period are unclear. Some take the end of the Crimean war as the start, but Edward Spiers, in his book the 'Late Victorian Army', covers the period between 1868 and 1902. The key reason for this is that it starts with the appointment of Edward Cardwell as Secretary of State for War in December 1868. For many, Cardwell's appointment is seen as the beginning of the modern army. The series of reforms that he instituted commenced the change away from the army that had fought the Napoleonic Wars, and had recently failed to deal with the rigours of the Crimea War. However the Cardwell reforms were just part of a period of almost constant reform.

This chapter will look at the nature of the army and its position in society at that time along with the constant debate about control of the army. It will also examine two of the most significant Secretaries of State for War, namely Cardwell and Stanhope.

Whilst there were other reformers during this period, both men had the advantage of serving long periods at the War Office. The main aim of this chapter, however, is to place in its proper context the career of Sir Henry Brackenbury and give a brief account of the organisation of which he was for so long an important member.

The standing of the British Army

The British Army was in a unique position because unlike its European rivals it had no land borders to protect at home. This, along with the presumed supremacy of the Royal Navy, was the basic reason why Britain could afford to have such a small army recruited by means of voluntary enlistment. The average size of the British Army during this period was around 150,000 men, excluding the British garrison in India

which was maintained at a fixed level.¹ This compared poorly with the peacetime standing of the French Army, which averaged 544,450, the German Army, which numbered 545,000 and the Russian Army, which averaged 896,000.² Yet the real picture was far worse as all these nations had compulsory military service of one form or another and could quickly double their strength. Indeed, much interest was caused in Britain by the German system of short service which meant that a soldier spent three years with the colours and then four years in the first rank of reserves. The British system compared badly, with a soldier spending twenty-one years with the colours. This had the effect that even the youngest soldiers were nearing their forties by the time they joined any sort of reserve. As a result there was little practical backup for the standing army.

The reasons for this were varied. There were the obvious economic reasons. The first line of defence was always going to be the Royal Navy, which itself cost a great deal to maintain. The argument ran that with the supremacy of the Royal Navy there was no need to worry too much about the army. This is a point borne out by the fact that many of the improvements in the army came during the periods of invasions scares when the supremacy of the Royal Navy was questioned. There was however a wider question concerning the status of the Army. The idea of a large standing army was not just unpopular as regards expense. There was a wider concern, which dated back to the times of the Commonwealth when Cromwell's large standing army had supported his 'dictatorship'. This was also supported by recent history, especially in France, and as a result the perception existed in Britain that a large standing army was synonymous with dictatorship. There were also wider social issues involving loss of liberty. A soldier's life was not particularly pleasant. They were subject to brutal and humiliating punishment, often for quite minor offences even by Victorian standards,

and living conditions were poor, as was pay and life expectancy. There was also a very real chance of death, or perhaps worse being crippled and confined, more often than not, to life as a beggar. A stigma arose around being a soldier, and many stories exist of families saying that members were dead rather than admit to the humiliation of having a soldier in the family.³ All this resulted in the army only being able to recruit from the lowest section of society, and joining the army for many was an act of desperation. The obvious consequence was that recruitment became harder. It has been said that:

Recruiting a Regular Army by voluntary enlistment in an industrial and profoundly anti-militarist country like Britain has so far proved an insoluble problem. In Victoria's reign even the harsh incentives of insecurity, a high level of unemployment, and a low standard of living failed to supply a steady flow of candidates for the Queen's shilling.⁴

Whilst the public enjoyed the sight of the army in grand parades and took pride in its exploits in the ever-expanding empire, what it did not want was to see soldiers in their towns or cities or have to pay any more in taxes to support them. As a consequence the only time that reform of the army was taken seriously was during times of threat. When the Prussian, and later German, army was crushing all before it the case for reform grew. When invasion scares, which came and went throughout the Victorian period, arose so did the clamour for action to reform the army, but governments began to realise that if they were perceived to be doing something, normally by establishing a commission or committee, the clamour would soon subside. Even the briefest look at the invasion scares of the late Victorian era highlights this.

Control of the Army

The Crimean War perhaps did more than anything to highlight the need for reform in the army. The war was little short of a disaster. The army nearly collapsed under the

strain of the operation. When war broke out in 1854 nearly forty years of neglect were illustrated by the state of the army. Perhaps an equally significant problem was the presence of the Duke of Wellington as Commander-in-Chief for much of the intervening period. Deeply conservative in many ways, he refused to alter the military system that he had so bitterly complained about during his period as a commander in the field. The Duke did his best to keep the army out of view both physically and economically, fearing demands for economy. As a consequence the army had been largely ignored since the end of the Napoleonic Wars; little had been changed. What caused the greatest problems was a divided system of command and control at home. There were nine different, and even in some cases conflicting, offices responsible for the army.⁵ It was in fact during the war that this system was changed, such were its obvious flaws, and in 1855 the army was reorganised, to be controlled by the Secretary of State for War and the Commander-in-Chief. Control of the army was in many ways a constant battle. Parliamentary control was assured by financial control but the army remained very much a royal body. Queen Victoria in particular viewed the army very much as hers, and in this she was assisted by the fact that from 1856-1895 her cousin, the Duke of Cambridge, was Commander-in-Chief. A succession of Secretaries of State for War found their attempts at reform halted by this royal combination. They had even tried to halt Cardwell in his reforms by attempting to have him appointed Speaker of the House of Commons, a prestigious appointment but not one that interested Cardwell.⁶ It was in ways like this and through such influence that royal control remained important within the army.

Whilst parliamentary control was said to be stronger because of the changes made immediately after the Crimean war, an alternative argument can be made. Indeed

Brackenbury himself argued that the change had actually weakened parliamentary control as the whole burden for the army, within parliament, rested on one man: the Secretary of State for War. He acknowledged that the Commander-in Chief sat in the House of Lords but in the case of the Duke of Cambridge there was little parliament could do to exercise power over, “a Prince of the blood Royal”.⁷ In fact trying to control the Duke of Cambridge was a constant problem. If he could not stop a minister himself he felt no compunction about appealing directly to the Queen. Whilst ultimately control of the army rested with parliament, many schemes for the improvement of the army, most notably the replacement of the Commander-in-Chief with a Chief of Staff, were abandoned because whilst politicians saw the merits of the schemes they knew that royal opposition would make the process more trouble than it was worth. Not only was this a period in which groups of soldiers, whether reformers or conservatives, ‘Africans’ or ‘Indians’, supporters of Wolseley or Roberts, would battle to influence and control the army, there remained the battle between monarch and parliament over whom the army ‘belonged’ to. It was to take the First World War to ultimately decide this issue, although the legacy of this dispute can still be seen today in the oath of allegiance that every soldier takes. It refers to the monarch and officers of the army but makes no reference to Her Majesty’s Government, either implicitly or explicitly.

Colonial Warfare: The Era of Small Wars

Between 1815 and 1914 Britain only once fought a European power, during the Crimean War of 1854-5. Although at times it faced enemies with modern weapons and European training, most notably Egypt in 1882 and the Boers in 1881 and from 1899-1902, and although in the case of the latter the conflict saw the despatch of the largest army ever to leave Britain, it did to all intents and purposes remain a colonial

campaign. The possibility of war with a European power did occur from time to time during this period, but Britain's ability to contribute to such a conflict was limited. The greatest benefit that Britain could bring to a potential continental ally was control of the seas through the presumed supremacy of the Royal Navy. Yet in terms of a land force Britain's ability to contribute was negligible. It was supposed that the largest force that could be placed in the field, given the imperial commitments of the army, was 40,000 men, although in actual fact it was probably closer to 20,000.⁸ In an era when European armies were being measured in millions of men it showed the weakness of the position. It was during the period that Brackenbury was in the army that ideas started to change so that by 1916 Britain did place armies of a million men or more in the field.

The weakness of the British position and the fact that things would ultimately have to change had been made clear when in 1864 Prussia threatened to invade Denmark. The Prime Minister of the day, Lord Palmerston, threatened to intervene on behalf of Denmark, but the Prussians called his bluff and invaded. Palmerston was helpless and the weakness of Britain's position in Europe was highlighted. It will be appreciated that for a long time the idea that Britain could maintain and influence the 'balance of power' in Europe was the mainstay of British policy. This was not always to be done by military power, and indeed both Pitt the Elder and Pitt the Younger when Prime Minister had followed policies which called for British maritime and financial power rather than military. Circumstances were now altering so that military power was becoming more important, especially given the rise of Prussian, later German, military power, but equally the perennial threat posed by France created many of the invasion scares. During the latter half of the nineteenth Century the

German Army, at full wartime establishment, could call on over 6 million trained men, the French approximately 4 and a half million men, Austria-Hungary 3 million men and Russia 4 million men.⁹ In such a context should Britain's difficulties to place even 40,000 men on the continent be viewed.

At the same time Britain's Empire was still expanding. So whilst no European war was fought during this period the army found itself almost constantly engaged in one conflict or another somewhere in the world. The opponents and conditions they faced varied dramatically. They came up against the highly disciplined and well trained Zulus and Maoris, the 'fanatical' charges of the warriors of the Sudan but also the more conventional armies of Egypt and the Boers. The Boers were in fact the closest that Britain ever came to facing a European power during this period, and not simply because of their ancestry. They were armed with modern artillery, rifles and machine guns, and were supported by a small but prosperous economy. Such a variety of opponents led to a belief that the British army faced a unique set of circumstances and could not therefore conform to the traditions and tactics of European armies.¹⁰ More often than not, more important than tactics was the ability to cope with the climate and conditions of the area. Two examples of this are the Abyssinian campaign of 1868 and the Ashanti War of 1873-74 both of which succeeded in difficult conditions and terrain because the campaign had been thought out and well organised.

This period, however, was not without its dramatic and embarrassing defeats. They were, and still are, perhaps given more attention than they deserve. This is perhaps not surprising as the 'professional' and technologically advanced British Army should not have suffered defeats at the hands of colonial enemies no matter how well trained they were. Yet military history is full of such incidences, where victory is gained against

the odds. More often than not British defeats could justifiably be put down to poor decision making on the part of the officers in command, such as Lord Chelmsford before Isandlwana or George Colley at Majuba Hill. In both cases there was also a degree of arrogance and underestimation of the enemy. The importance of these defeats has caused debate. Brian Bond, in 'The Late Victorian Army', declares that this period was not, "a particularly distinguished period in the history of British arms".¹¹ He points to the lack of clear-cut victories. This is true as many of the 'crushing defeats' that were inflicted by the British came after either embarrassing defeats or inauspicious starts. He therefore takes the view that such clear-cut victories as occurred had exaggerated praise heaped upon them. Perhaps the key example of this is the Red River Expedition in Canada, which made the reputation of Garnet Wolseley. The campaign was against a small band of rebels who fled before the advancing British force of 1,200 troops. The campaign was noted for its organisation and efficiency with which the force moved over 1,118 miles between the 14th May and 24th August 1870. To say this success is taken out of proportion is perhaps unfair as the campaign was a logistical triumph in extreme conditions. Perhaps more accurate was the defence of Rorkes Drift, which although unquestionably heroic, took on legendary status because of the way it was handled by a government desperate to find good news in the wake of Isandlwana. Edward Spiers and Denis Judd have separately expressed a slightly different view to Bond.¹² Both are of the opinion that the positives outweighed the negatives, and Judd wrote that:

The fumbleings and failings of Victorian military history do not, of course, outweigh the success, since for every Majuba Hill there were any number of Omdurmans and Ulundis.¹³

Whilst true it does still leave the question as to whether such defeats as Majuba should ever have happened on the scale that they did and whether they occurred

because of shortcomings in army command and organisation.

Despite the failures it can be argued that the British Army became quite proficient at fighting such wars. Edward Spiers, when writing about colonial campaigns, suggests that, “Although disasters periodically occurred, triumphs were much more frequent.”¹⁴ The record of the British in colonial campaigns was superior to that of any other European power. The Royal Navy and the size of Britain’s merchant marine clearly gave it a great advantage. As a result the army became accustomed to, and quite adept at what would now be called expeditionary warfare. This was something to which no other power was able to adapt. The mighty German Army, for much of this period unrivalled in Europe, found great difficulty in maintaining its troops in China without the support of other powers. Famously in 1897 the Germans could not find the capability to send even a battalion to Crete. Of course Germany was primarily a European power for much of this era and thus such concerns were beyond them. Perhaps more pertinent is the performance of the French. Obviously France had great continental commitments but it also possessed an empire second only to the British in size and scope. Yet in 1895 the French had to rent British merchant ships to enable them to invade Madagascar, even though France was considered to be the world’s second naval power after Britain. Their conduct of the campaign was also far worse than anything the British Army at its worst achieved and was a disaster. Although at this stage considered one of the lesser Great Powers the U.S.A had equal difficulties, and struggled to invade Cuba in 1898 during the Spanish-American war, despite the fact that it was only 90 miles off its own coastline. It was a logistical nightmare in which the majority of the cavalry suddenly became infantry as a result of the drowning of most of the horses on landing! The culmination of British success in this field was during the South African War. Whilst the War itself was somewhat of a

fiasco, the sheer feat of transporting and maintaining the army in South Africa was a remarkable success. As Jay Stone comments:

Under the circumstances, the fact that the British transported 250,000 men over 6,000 miles over land and water and sustained them in the field for several years without disrupting the national economy, must surely be seen as a substantial achievement.¹⁵

More recently it has been written that, “It remains surprising that such little recognition has been paid to what was a remarkable success story”.¹⁶

Although success in this field had a lot to do with the Royal Navy, it would be unfair to ignore the role of the army. This style of expeditionary warfare became quite easy for the army to undertake, and on the whole they became quite good at it. Forces were organised and deployed without too much trouble. It is true that the practice of drawing men from other regiments was still common for forces going overseas, as they needed to bring their battalion up to strength, but this had more to do with the peculiarities of the regimental system, particularly after the Cardwell Reforms, than anything else. It is often suggested that such forces were ‘cobbled’ together for particular expeditions and it is true that many times, especially after an early setback, troops were sent from other parts of the empire. In some ways this showed the strength of the British position. In a similar way to the United States today, wherever in the world an incident occurred there were always British, Colonial or Royal Navy assets available to lend support. The obvious example of this is India from where troops, mostly British but occasionally Indian, were sent to support operations in Africa and the Mediterranean.

Cardwell Reforms

Although unquestionably important to the development of the British Army during

this period, there has been a tendency to overstate the magnitude of this series of reforms. Their most significant effect was to sweep away some of the more antiquated elements of the army and, indeed, Brian Bond described them as “a belated response to the glaring deficiencies in the organisation of the British Army as revealed by the Crimean War”.¹⁷ To understand the limitations of the reforms it must be remembered why the Government introduced them. Gladstone’s administration of 1868 to 1874 is widely regarded as one of the great reforming governments. However, the reforms were not designed for the benefit of the army as a fighting force. The aim was to reduce the cost of the army. In some ways this was done by an attempt at greater efficiency. Cardwell himself had no military background, nor had he taken any significant part in military debate up to his appointment as Secretary of State for War. It has been argued that this actually proved to be an advantage as he took a detached view without prejudice for tradition or ‘esprit de corps’.

One of the earliest reforms was to reduce the number of British troops dispersed around the colonies. The reason that such a situation existed dated back to the Duke of Wellington, who had realised that a large army garrisoned within the British Isles would lead to demands for reductions in its size. In an attempt to prevent this Wellington sought to distribute the army amongst the colonies and thus keep it away from public view. The problem was that as a result many battalions found themselves almost constantly overseas, which was a disincentive to recruitment. As a result the number of British troops in the colonies, excluding India, was reduced from 50,000 to 23,941 during Cardwell’s time in office.¹⁸ This allowed him to introduce another reform which he hoped would improve recruitment and give the reserve of soldiers that was obviously needed. The argument for short service was clear to Cardwell. It would ensure that soldiers were in the prime of life during their military service. It

would also mean that a reserve could finally be established amongst the civilian population that could be called out in times of emergency to swell the ranks. Perhaps more importantly it would immediately reduce the cost of the army by £1,500,000.¹⁹ Although the savings were undoubtedly what attracted his cabinet colleagues to the idea, Cardwell had a wider vision based on the successful Prussian system.

Before going any further it is necessary to clarify the importance of the influence of Prussian military success on the Cardwell Reforms. Such successes strengthened Cardwell's hand in one respect, as public and military opinion moved towards the necessity of reform, but on the other hand it has been argued that it largely halted any attempt at a more wide ranging reform of the army. Brian Bond argues that the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the last of a series of military triumphs for Prussia, actually had the effect of removing the main concern and preoccupation of parliament and the army, namely the threat of invasion. From the end of the Crimean War through to 1871 there were constant anxieties about invasion, concerns raised about coastal defences, and the capability of the army in Britain to deal with any landings. Up to 1871 the main threat had been France but there was now growing concern about the rise of Prussian/German power. After the defeat by Prussia, France was in no state to contemplate invasion, added to the fact the Napoleon III who was seen as the instigator of such fears was no longer in power. Bond recognises the fact that in public opinion 1871 actually saw a rise in invasion scares, after the publication of General Sir George Chesney's rather alarmist book the 'The Battle of Dorking', which envisaged a possible Prussian invasion. Whilst there was a reaction from both the public and politicians to this perceived fear, Bond illustrates that the reality of

such an invasion was somewhat different. He supports this with the words of an M.P who at the time said in the House of Commons of a possible Prussian invasion, “How are they to arrive in this country? Will they charter the British Fleet?”²⁰ Prussian victories were more important in terms of an example of organisation and for illustrating once again, as the Crimean War had, just how far behind the British army had fallen, but it is wrong to view Prussian success as the driving force behind the Cardwell reforms.

In Prussia, short service was based on two years in the infantry, or three in the cavalry and artillery, and four or five years with the active reserve. There were two layers to the reserve system called the ‘Landwehr’ and the ‘Landsturm’ and service with the latter continued until the age of forty-five. The system had proved itself against Denmark in 1864, Austria in 1866 and France in 1870. Indeed, in 1870, Prussia placed 400,000 men in the field at the start of the war against the French, the majority of whom were reservists. It was this that Cardwell wished to emulate. The problem was that the Prussian system was based on conscription. Conscription was impossible politically and the concept of short service had to accommodate the British need to garrison the empire.

This was especially true of India where 60,000 British troops had to be established permanently. Three years service would make this very difficult and it would increase the cost of garrisoning the empire in terms of transporting troops back and forth. The British compromise was to introduce short service on the basis of six years service with the colours and six years in the reserve. The other element of the Prussian system that went with this was localisation. Prussia, and later Germany, was split into military districts each of which provided an army corps made up of regulars and the

different levels of the reserve. The British system was again somewhat different due to the demands of the Empire. Each Regiment would now have two battalions, one stationed at home and the other abroad. The one at home would keep the one abroad up to strength with drafts of men until it replaced the other battalion.

Using the Prussian example the militia were linked with the regular battalions in the localisation scheme. The militia was the traditional volunteer force for home defence raised on a county or district basis. Each area was set a quota of men dependent upon local factors. Uniquely there was a degree of compulsory service, and if sufficient numbers could not be found through volunteers, as was often the case, local administration had the power to fill the ranks by ballot amongst the eligible male population. Although theoretically only for home service they did on occasion, most notably during the Crimean and South African Wars, serve in overseas garrisons so as to release regular troops for frontline service. With their being linked to the localisation scheme the theory was that the three battalions, two regular and one militia, formed a 'brigade'. It was an obvious attempt to copy the Prussian system but in many ways it failed. There were notable occasions when both battalions found themselves overseas at the same time, and the militia battalion was very limited in what it could do.

The main and perhaps only advantage to emerge from short service was the development of a reserve. In 1882 it was used for the first time and 10,800 reservists were recalled to the colours for service in Egypt.²¹ However even raising this number proved a struggle and this was not what the reserve was designed for. The reserve was for large-scale wars rather than colonial campaigns. If anything this highlighted the weakness of the British Army since to place an army of 20,000 men in the field in

Egypt it was necessary to have half the force made up of reservists. Any attempt to emulate the Prussian system was unlikely ever to work because of the difference in responsibilities and circumstances of the two nations. Whilst antipathy towards conscription was a key difference there were other problems, such as Prussia and Germany's lack of an Empire, Germany's larger population, a smaller number of people involved in industry, and the fact that it was never envisaged that they would operate far from mainland Germany.

Unquestionably the most controversial of Cardwell's reforms was the abolition of the purchase system whereby officers had bought their initial commission and every promotion thereafter up to the rank of Colonel. Obviously, this did not encourage a professional spirit, and indeed such a spirit was frowned upon. Such a system meant that a regiment became virtually the property of its colonel. As Cardwell wrote to Gladstone, "Our principle is that the officers shall be made for the Army. Their principle is that the Army is made for the officers".²² Originally Cardwell had expected little opposition, but it soon became clear that this would not be the case. In fact the opposition was led by the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge. As Cardwell had used the Prussian and German victories to support his reforms, the Duke of Cambridge now used them to support the status quo. The Duke pointed out that all Prussian officers were 'gentleman' of breeding whereas the French were largely officered by men who had come through the ranks. To the Duke of Cambridge Prussia's crushing victory over France proved that the British system was fundamentally sound. Although his position sounds rather archaic it must be added that, at the same time, he advocated better training and instruction for officers.

Although it was argued that the purchase system would not have prevented any of

Cardwell's other reforms this missed the point. As Brian Bond put it, "Purchase was the standard under which military reactionaries congregated".²³ The aim of Cardwell's reforms was to increase the efficiency of the army and therefore lower its cost. The type of officer needed to achieve such efficiency was discouraged by the purchase system, as money and not merit was the criteria for advancement. Cardwell found that he had little support for this within his own party, never mind parliament in general. The problem was that very few within parliament were without some relative or another who had a personal interest in purchase. This was why Cardwell was forced to accept that compensation to officers would have to be based on the market price for their existing commissions, an estimated £8,000,000.²⁴

The 'enthusiasm' for army reform, which the Prussian victories helped to encourage, had died away by the time the Bill went through the house. The second reading provoked widespread opposition, although it is interesting to note that much of it was based on the proposed cost. The Bill passed by fifty-eight votes in the House of Commons due to the enforcement of strict party discipline and the unofficial support of Disraeli, the leader of the opposition. In the House of Lords it was defeated, largely due to the non-committal nature of the Duke of Cambridge's speech; he had been persuaded to speak only after the intervention of Gladstone and Cardwell. The government threatened to introduce the Bill through Royal Warrant, as the purchase of commissions only existed by Royal command, the Brokerage Act of 1809 having already made the practice illegal save for the approval of the Crown. Ultimately, on 1st November 1871, a Royal Warrant cancelled the purchase of commissions.²⁵

The abolition of purchase did not lead to a radical alteration in the social background of officers, nor create a more professional type of officer. Harries-Jenkins dedicated a

whole chapter to the purchase debate and its outcome. His work demonstrates that little changed in the composition of the officer corps until the eve of the First World War.²⁶ This is supported by W.S.Hamer's view of the post abolition system where,

Men of lesser means could gain rapid promotion through intellectual distinction, but the aristocracy and landed gentry still sent their sons 'for to be a soldier'. Men such as Henry Brackenbury and Sir Frederick Maurice were promoted on grounds of their own personal achievements. Others such as Sir Henry Wilson, Lord Chelmsford, Douglas Haig, were sons of the well-to-do.²⁷

Hamer stresses the point that little changed in the composition, and even someone like Brackenbury who is given as an example of promotion by merit, was himself from a landed family.

It was only as a result of the First World War that the number of officers from the aristocracy declined in favour of those from the middle classes. The reason the social composition changed little was a much wider issue than the purchase system. The lifestyle and regimental expenses of an officer meant that their pay was never sufficient. It was essential that an officer had personal income outside of his pay. For most this meant through family wealth. Brackenbury was in fact one of the few exceptions, being able to support himself through his writing and journalism, but even this was difficult and his constant desire for service in India was partly motivated by the comparative cheapness of service there. The fact that the social composition of the officer corps did not change was also due to the attitude of the Duke of Cambridge. Cardwell may have hoped that merit was now the criteria for promotion, but the Duke still held power over promotion, and continued to adhere to the principle of promotion by seniority. Cardwell steered away from further confrontation with him, which once again illustrates the extent of royal influence. The government had in many ways 'forced' royal support for the abolition of the purchase system, and were reluctant to go further.

Although Cardwell may secretly have liked to remove the Duke as Commander-in-Chief the royal connection was such that this was virtually impossible.²⁸ Cardwell did hope that the support of the Duke could be gained for many of his reforms, thus strengthening his case, but the Commander-in-Chief clung to the old ideas. It is very easy to think of him as a conservative relic of the army of the Duke of Wellington. He shared Wellington's conservatism, which in many ways was as much about a way of life as the best way to govern the army. He was very popular with large sections of the army, partly because of his Royal status but also because of his ability and willingness to stand up to the civilian government. The problem was that many of his ideas to improve the army and the conditions of its soldiers were lost as he battled to retain the 'old' army. That the Duke of Cambridge cared deeply about the army, including the ordinary soldier, was not in doubt but filled with antiquated notions about the army, war and the state in general his good intentions often caused more harm than good. In the end it became necessary for Cardwell to remove the last vestiges of independence that the Commander-in-Chief had.²⁹

After the Crimean War it had been envisaged that the Commander-in-Chief and Secretary of State would work together as equals. This was clearly not going to be the case. Cardwell eventually made the Duke of Cambridge leave his offices at Horse Guards and move to the War Office in Pall Mall. It sent a clear message about the 'independence' of the Commander in Chief. This was part of a much wider scheme of reorganisation, which attempted to improve upon the very rushed and somewhat ad hoc changes that had taken place during and immediately after the Crimean War. Cardwell sought to create a single controlling force for the army, namely the War Office. The result was to reduce the Commander-in-Chief to the role of chief adviser

to the Secretary of State for War. It has been argued that Cardwell made these changes to rid the army of dual governance and that he had no wish to erode the status of the Commander-in-Chief as such.³⁰ Cardwell undoubtedly realised that he needed the Duke of Cambridge if he was to achieve his reforms, as evidenced by his correspondence with Gladstone, but he wanted to make sure that the Duke realised fully the constitutional position, and that it was he and not the Duke who was ultimately responsible.³¹ The Duke of Cambridge did retain full power over matters of command, discipline, training, and education, appointments, and promotion, recruiting and reserve forces. Nonetheless these changes firmly, and officially, established the supremacy of parliament, although royal influence remained.

As has already been said, the Cardwell reforms continued the process of sweeping away the pre-Crimean War army, especially in the field of War Office organisation. The problem is that the Cardwell reforms are often viewed on their own and not as part of a continuing process of reform throughout the century. There were undoubtedly problems with the reforms. The idea of linked battalions failed to have the desired effect. The home battalion became little more than a training battalion, with its main purpose being to provide recruits for the battalion overseas. Consequently the majority of soldiers left with the home battalion were unfit, too old, or too young for service overseas. This was illustrated by the Egyptian campaign of 1882 when the home battalions were called for overseas service but were woefully under strength and needed to be supported by reservists. This was also linked to short service, which was blamed for the defeats and setbacks against the Zulus, Boers and Afghans in the late 1870s and early 1880s, on account of a supposed lack of experienced soldiers in the ranks. As Brian Bond points out, at the root of all these

problems was recruiting.³² Linked battalions and short service were good ideas in principle, but whilst there remained a lack of good recruits, and with conscription unacceptable, they were doomed to failure. As Edward Spiers has shown Cardwell hoped that short service and linked battalions, and the localisation of the regiment, would improve recruitment.³³ This missed the fact that the main drawbacks to service were the conditions. Poor food, low wages, cramped and squalid living conditions, no married quarters, vicious and humiliating punishments, and the social stigma that was attached to being a soldier could not be easily swept away. This was something that Brackenbury himself had noticed and wrote upon extensively in his articles on military reform during the late 1860s and early 1870s, of which more will be said in the chapter on Brackenbury's literary career. Until such concerns began to be addressed there was little attraction in the life of a soldier and the army continued to struggle to find good men to join. If there was a success story for short service it was the fact that Britain finally established a trained reserve. In 1869 the reserve, including the militia, had stood at 33,000: by 1899 the reserve, excluding the militia, numbered some 80,000 men.³⁴ Even this had its drawbacks. The fact that during this period the reserve was called out several times meant that reservists found it hard to obtain regular civilian employment. The legacy of Cardwell is best summed up by Brian Bond who wrote, "Cardwell should be regarded as a pioneer who blazed the trail for later reformers- not, as Sir Robert Biddulph suggested in his biography, "the man who revolutionised the British Army""³⁵

Stanhope Reforms

Edward Stanhope served as Secretary of State for War from January 1887 to August 1892. His period in charge is often overlooked but many of the changes and reforms that he implemented were of equal importance to those of Cardwell.³⁶ Like Cardwell

he had the advantage of spending a long period as Secretary of State for War. Other reformers such as Hugh Childers only spent a couple of years as Secretary of State and were unable to build up much impetus. Cardwell's reforms stood out as part of a reforming ministry whereas the Conservative Government to which Stanhope belonged was not expected to undertake dramatic reform. Like Cardwell he had no experience of the army before being appointed. This was a drawback initially as he entered the War Office during a period of great debate and uncertainty about the state of the army and the defence of Britain and the empire. Both the Stephen Commission on Warlike Stores and the Morley Committee's inquiry into the Manufacturing Departments of the Army were in progress as he entered office. Both had been appointed as a result of the problems encountered in the Sudan in 1884-85. Stanhope's reforms were in some ways less dramatic than Cardwell's and his reforms were more concerned with the capability of the army as a fighting force.

The Stephen Commission was very critical of the whole administration of the army, and the Morley Committee found that the Manufacturing Departments were wholly inefficient and inadequate to meet military needs. The Government was also under pressure from the recently resigned Lord Randolph Churchill, whose resignation had led to the reshuffle that brought Stanhope to the War Office. Churchill attacked what he saw as gross extravagance in military spending. After less than six months in the job Stanhope faced aggressive questioning from Churchill and other members of the Select Committee on Army and Navy Estimates. All this shows that Stanhope came to the War Office at a very difficult time.

One of his earliest moves came out of the reports of these two committees. They reached different conclusions over what was the best solution to the inefficiency that

they found. The Morley Committee advocated the creation of more civilian administrators, whereas the Stephen Commission wanted to increase military control. The Stephen Commission felt that such an enhancement in military control would actually help the civilian head of the War Office by freeing him from military detail.³⁷ Stanhope increased military administrative control, but held back from creating the council of senior military figures that the commission had recommended. This reorganisation of 1888 helped to clarify the division of responsibility between civilians and soldiers that had begun during the Crimean War. Stanhope declared that the soldiers now had the power to use the military resources as they saw fit to meet the requirements and needs of the moment; in his words, “All the threads are in their own hands”.³⁸

Whilst this was true it omitted the fact that financial control of the civilian government had been extended. The Financial Secretary now had control over the whole War Office in terms of funding. On a rare occasion of unity both the Duke of Cambridge and Wolseley complained that they could not be responsible for the condition of the army whilst civilians maintained financial control.³⁹ The reorganisation had the effect of making the soldiers ‘responsible’, whilst civilian government kept hold of the purse strings. The Stephen Commission had in fact recommended that the soldiers submit an annual statement to parliament on what they felt was needed. With such evidence on public record it would be a considerable political risk for the politicians to ignore such advice. In light of this it is unsurprising that this recommendation was ignored. As debate raged on the subject of home defence the government could argue that it had now turned responsibility over to the ‘experts’, whilst the soldiers maintained they could never be responsible for the state

of defences whilst they had no financial control. The Stephen Commission's recommendation would have been a good way round this problem as it would have kept financial control with the civilians, but the soldiers would have their chance to state publicly what they felt was needed, leaving the government open to criticism if such needs were not met. This division between military control and government financial control would become a common debate throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Stanhope's legacy was embodied in the so-called Stanhope Memorandum.⁴⁰ Its significance has perhaps been misunderstood. The Stanhope Memorandum defined the purposes of the army. Up to this point no list of expected duties had been set down. The Adjutant General, Lord Wolseley, had been pressing for such a definition of duties for many years. The extra impetus for the memorandum came from Henry Brackenbury as Head of the Intelligence Branch. Brackenbury had been attempting to draw up mobilisation plans, which was surprisingly one of his duties, but had found it impossible without knowing what it was he was supposed to be preparing for. The memorandum, originally written on 8th December 1888, set out five purposes in order of priority. First was to support the civil power within the United Kingdom, which largely meant the maintenance of law and order. Second, the army had to find and supply the necessary men for the draft for India that was set at a level agreed with the Government of India. Third, it was charged with garrisoning fortresses and coaling stations at home and abroad. Fourth, after providing for the aforementioned duties, it was expected to mobilise two Army Corps of regular troops rapidly for home defence and a third made up partly of regulars augmented by the militia. The fifth purpose was little more than an afterthought, which envisaged the possibility of sending abroad two army corps, a cavalry division and line of communication troops.

Fulfilling the fourth and fifth aims created problems in terms of a lack of sufficient support troops, and an explanation of the problems identified by Brackenbury in this area will be undertaken in more detail later. The weakness of the memorandum was that it largely ignored imperial defence, which had become the main purpose, in reality, of the army. It is also uncertain how widely this memorandum was known, even within military circles. It did not become public knowledge until 1901.⁴¹

Criticism has been made of the order of priorities. Gooch has asserted that the order of priorities - most notably the inclusion of support for the civil power as first priority – was “More suited to the conditions of 1818 than those of 1888”. This may be correct but does ignore the particular problems of the time.⁴² The late 1880s and early 1890s saw a particularly high level of civil unrest. There had been disturbances in Lancashire, the ‘Crofters War’ in the Western Isles and the ‘Tithe War’ in north Wales. There had also been the Home Rule riot in Trafalgar Square in November 1887. It is important to remember that support of the civil power also included Ireland and that during the 1880s there had been an increase in Fenian attacks both in Ireland and on the mainland. Added to this the early 1890s saw a rise in industrial unrest, and troops were used to cover during the London dock strike of late 1889 and the police strike of July 1890, whilst preparations were made for the army to take over the running of the Gas, Light and Coke Company in September 1890 when a strike threatened to cut off all power to the City of London.⁴³ This period also saw the infamous ‘mutiny’ of the 2nd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards in July 1890.⁴⁴ With further civil unrest anticipated the order of priorities was hardly surprising. It is easy to criticise the memorandum for failing to confront the issue of imperial defence or wider strategic issues. It is questionable whether Stanhope had the power to do

anything about such matters. What the memorandum did do was create a framework within which military planning could take place. It was within this framework that the hugely successful mobilisations plans, which worked with such ease and efficiency during the South African War, were drawn up.

Stanhope also left more practical legacies such as the creation of the Army Service Corps. It was also through his efforts that the magazine rifle was finally introduced after a committee had been discussing it since 1883. It was Stanhope who persuaded the Treasury to allocate the necessary funds. He also obtained money for the building of a series of new barrack rooms which were desperately needed due to the unsanitary conditions that existed in many camps, although the argument he used was that it would save on repairs and the fact that the small size of barracks meant that many soldiers had to be housed elsewhere at extra cost. It was also during his tenure that breech-loading artillery was introduced, despite the fact that British industry had first developed this method twenty years before. In response to Brackenbury's warnings about the lack of defensive positions around London sixteen mobilisation centres were built, the so-called 'Stanhope Storehouses', which would supply and maintain the defensive positions around London if invasion ever happened. Despite the criticism of the Stanhope Memorandum for its failure to address matters of imperial defence, Stanhope did establish, in 1891, the Naval and Military Committee, which was set up to coordinate the defence of ports and coaling stations. This was the precursor of the later Committee of Imperial Defence.

One weakness of Stanhope's tenure at the War Office was his response to the Hartington Commission of 1890, and his failure to see that its recommendations offered him much of what he required. Stanhope had complained that there was, "as a

rule no well-informed and capable adviser who looked at a question all round”.⁴⁵ This was an inevitable consequence of the system in existence. The Commander-in-Chief, who should have been able to do this, had far too much responsibility in other areas to ever achieve this. As for the other leading soldiers at the War Office, each of them had their own areas of responsibility, which took up their time. The solution was found in the Hartington Commission’s recommendation of the creation of a Chief of Staff and therefore a General Staff.⁴⁶ This office would be concerned at looking at strategic issues only, and planning and preparing solutions and responses. This was the answer to Stanhope’s problem but he was unwilling to fight for it given that he would have faced resolute opposition from the Commander-in-Chief and the Queen, and there were few others, soldiers or politicians, who actively supported the idea.

Continentalists, Imperialists and colonial campaigning⁴⁷

From the end of the Crimean War to the start of World War One the British Army never faced a European power in battle. Yet despite this there was not a year that passed by in which British soldiers were not involved in fighting somewhere in the empire. This meant that the army was under constant pressure to provide men for expeditions, as well as maintaining the permanent garrison in India. This often meant that fixed formations and structures, such as was seen on the continent, were unworkable given the size of the army. As a result many such campaigns required the creation of ad hoc groups with men and staff often serving in unfamiliar formations. As a consequence British military thinking tended to be very much based around the regiment rather than brigades divisions or corps. This is a contributing reason as to why the importance attached to the regiment and the sense of regimental esprit de corps was greater than in many other armies.

Whilst it never fought in Europe during this period the army was engaged in almost constant warfare, gaining a great deal of combat experience, although there was considerable debate on the value of such experience. Imperialists saw the benefits of colonial wars but the so-called ‘continentalists’ derided the value of such exploits and looked to learn from European warfare, in most cases Prussia. Colonel Lonsdale Hale, a vigorous continentalist wrote that,

An Officer who has seen service must sweep from his mind all recollections of that service, for between Afghan, Egyptian, or Zulu warfare and that of Europe, there is no similarity whatever. To the latter the former is merely the play of children.⁴⁸

Hale did make a legitimate point in terms of the difference of such styles of warfare, but he and others of the continentalist school were too obsessed with the Franco-Prussian War. Hale recommended to all officers that the official German account, “should be studied page by page, paragraph by paragraph, line by line”, at the exclusion of all else.⁴⁹ Indeed this seems to have been a problem in the approach of the continentalists. As Howard Bailes pointed out, they never actually made a study of the conflicts but rather preferred to take the official accounts of the war at face value. Bailes also identified, “a difference of philosophical outlook between the continentalist and imperial schools”. The continentalists stuck rigidly to the lessons of the war as the official history had described it, whereas the imperialist school was more concerned with serious analysis and using events as evidence. As Bailes wrote, “The one (continentalists) was concerned to exemplify, the other (imperialists) to demonstrate”.⁵⁰

The imperialists, not least of all Brackenbury, felt that there were unquestionable benefits to be had from small wars. Wolseley also pointed out that if nothing else it got British troops used to being under fire and in combat and, as he underlined in

1890, the Germans had not fired a shot in anger since 1871.⁵¹ Perhaps the definitive work of this period was Colonel Charles Callwell's 'Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice'. This became in effect the textbook for the British Army in this period. Callwell wrote that, "The Conduct of small wars is in fact in certain respects an art by itself, diverging widely from what is adapted to the conditions of regular warfare, but not so widely that there are not in all its branches points which permit comparisons to be established".⁵² The continentalist school, whilst many of its conclusions were valid, missed the point that colonial wars were now the main occupation of the army. As the Stanhope Memorandum had made clear involvement in a European war was unlikely, so there was little point in preparing an army to fight on the continent of Europe if it was to spend most of its time fighting throughout the Empire. The military writer T.M. Maguire also warned of too much concentration on European warfare,

While looking at the stars we may tumble in a ditch, and while lost in wonder at how to move effectively from Strasbourg, Mayence, and Metz towards Paris with many divisions of cavalry and armies consisting each of from three to eight corps, we may forget how to handle a few battalions in the passes of the Suleiman Range or in the deserts of Upper Egypt.⁵³

A famous example of this attitude was Sir Edward Hamley's 'Operations of War', first published in 1872, which was a standard text at the Staff College for many years and, indeed, until 1894 was the sole text for the entrance exam to the Staff College.⁵⁴ This completely ignored colonial campaigning, and as Bailes states, "It is remarkable that the most famous military treatise of late nineteenth-century Britain should have said almost nothing about the immediate problems facing its army", namely the constant fighting to maintain the Empire.⁵⁵

The existence of these debates goes a long way to disprove the assumption that there was little thought or intellectual debate in the British Army of this period. Whilst

perhaps limited there was a growing membership of intellectual groups inside the army. The 'Army and Navy Magazine' did much to sustain the traditionalist view, and its early issues in 1884 attacked the Cardwell reforms, short service and in particular the reforming group led by Wolseley. The reformers were open to personal attack as having gained rapid promotion,

By persistently blowing their own trumpets, and knowing nothing about their own or anyone else's regiment, and who abuse all offenders who do not think as they do; but their chief point is to unite at all times in belauding the Founder of the Society (Wolseley) especially, and each other in particular.⁵⁶

Reformers and Conservatives

There has been much made of the rivalry between Lord Wolseley and Lord Roberts and their respective supporters, often called 'rings'. The rivalry was fuelled by personal ambition, battlefield success and the actions of many of their followers.

More importantly, a key strategic issue divided them namely the status of India. To Roberts and those who followed the Indo-centric line British India was a power in itself. In an era when Russian aggression was a major concern it was argued that in this context India became a continental power having a direct border with areas of Russian influence. To this school of thought the main duty of the British army was to support the Indian Army and Roberts declared that in the event of war he would expect 20,000 to 30,000 British troops to be sent in support.⁵⁷ To Wolseley and his supporters invasion of the British Isles was the obsession, which in their eyes was made ever more likely because of good relations between France and Russia. The periodic invasion scares of the late nineteenth century supported this view. To them the main aim was home defence followed by support for amphibious operations and any British allies. This, and the natural divide between the British and Indian armies, was a key source of rivalry. Brackenbury seemed to want to keep clear of such

divides. Whilst relying on Wolseley for patronage in his early days he was a friend and admirer of Roberts. He never seemed to take part in such rivalry and actively sought employment in India on several occasions.

Whilst there was undoubtedly tension and rivalry between the two men and their supporters a much more important conflict within the army was between the reformers and conservatives. The reformers tended to be embodied in the form of Lord Wolseley, who actually had a very conservative view of many elements of the army.⁵⁸ Yet because of his close association with the Cardwell Reforms he was often seen as a dangerous reformer. The conservative side of the army was represented through the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge. Cambridge is often referred to as a 'bow and arrow' general and whilst deeply reactionary in some respects, namely his refusal to acknowledge that control of the army was the responsibility of parliament rather than the Crown, even a brief glance at his correspondence shows a man who cared deeply about the army and the individual soldier.⁵⁹ Occasionally reform met with his approval, most notably the reform and development of the Staff College, which Brian Bond argues would not have been re-established in 1858 had it not been for his support⁶⁰. He genuinely believed that his actions were always for the good of the army, and that he knew better than anyone what was best for the army. It was in this spirit that he opposed much of Cardwell's programme of reforms. Cambridge felt that the military setbacks of the 1870s and 1880s were a vindication of his opposition and illustrated that the Cardwell reforms had not succeeded.

Major-General Lord Edward Gleichen thought that the strain in relations between the Duke of Cambridge and Wolseley was not purely based on a division between reform

and conservatism. His experience was that some of the conflict was borne out of differences in work and systems of administration within the War Office. The Duke of Cambridge was overburdened, but would refuse to delegate.

Everybody was devoted to this dear old gentleman and no one wished him any harm; but still it was fairly patent to those who happened to think about it- not a very large body in those days- that the centralisation of all authority in one person, however capable or beloved, was an impossible strain on the machine, and delayed its expansion or development to an almost indefinite extent.⁶¹

Obviously Gleichen is referring to the failure to introduce a Chief of Staff, but Cambridge cannot be blamed entirely for that. It is quite true that he stated that there was no need for such an appointment as he himself fulfilled that role. Whilst this was to a large extent quite true, he had so many other duties and responsibilities that it was impossible for him to devote the time and detail to planning for future operations, nor did he have a staff dedicated to that aim in the form of a General Staff. The problem was that even after Cambridge retired in 1895 there was no adoption of a General Staff or Chief of Staff and nor was there until 1904, after the South African War had dramatically highlighted this problem. The Duke of Cambridge's position was made worse by the rather ad hoc way in which Wolseley undertook his work and his ignoring of the proper channels and red tape. In Gleichen's experience this led to a situation where "a department for instance, might receive direct orders to carry out a certain matter, which involved several other departments without the latter having been notified. The consequent confusion was dire, and only led to a loss of temper on all hands, and to strained relations becoming still more strained".⁶²

It is clear that the Duke of Cambridge did much, often simply by his presence, to stifle reform. Both Cardwell and Stanhope held back some reforms fearing his reaction. The Hartington Commission, in 1890, recommended the abolition of the post of Commander-in-Chief in and had proposed replacing him with a Chief of Staff. The

Commission is often recorded as having wanted this to happen on the retirement of the Duke but it did add the caveat of “or at any favourable opportunity”.⁶³ The hope of members of the Hartington Commission was that he could be persuaded to step down immediately so the recommendations could be implemented, but they phrased it so as to avoid royal anger at the suggestion. It failed to work and Her Majesty referred to it as “this really abominable report”.⁶⁴ It was largely the Queen’s response that led to the report being ignored. She saw it as a personal attack on her authority. “One of the greatest prerogatives of the Sovereign is the direct communication with an immovable and non-political officer of high rank about the army...”.⁶⁵ She was also concerned that her son, the Duke of Connaught, should ultimately succeed Cambridge as Commander-in-Chief.⁶⁶ The eventual death knell for the Hartington Commission was the arrival of a Liberal Government in 1892 and in particular Campbell-Bannerman’s appointment as Secretary of State for War. He had been the major dissenter on the Hartington Commission and had given the government all it needed as an excuse to ignore the report. He held a typical Liberal aversion to anything that was remotely militaristic. To him the creation of a Chief of Staff, a truly professional senior soldier, would make the possibility of war more, not less, likely. As Brian Bond has written, “To such a mind the Duke of Cambridge, although an obstacle to important internal reforms, was at least safer than a General Staff”.⁶⁷ Ironically it was Campbell-Bannerman who would successfully negotiate the retirement of the Duke of Cambridge in 1895.⁶⁸

In the words of Brian Bond, “By ousting the last Royal occupant from the highest office in the Army, the Government at last united theory and practice and severed the historic ties personally connecting the Sovereign with that service; a connection that

Queen Victoria had constantly and effectively exploited".⁶⁹ The problem was that little good came of the change. The position of Commander-in-Chief was weakened. The War Office Council was created and the heads of the other four great departments were placed on a par with the Commander-in-Chief, although the latter was still the senior soldier and chief adviser to the Secretary of State. Wolseley now saw the post as "the fifth wheel of the coach". Moreover Wolseley probably came to the position too late. By this time he had lost much of his zeal and energy and was already experiencing a decline of physical and mental health. As a result he became just as argumentative and troublesome to the politicians as the old Duke had been. He survived in office till 1900. His great rival Roberts, who performed the duty till the abolition of the office in 1904, when the recommendations of Hartington were finally implemented and a Chief of Staff created, replaced him. It had taken the defeats and administrative chaos of the South African War to illustrate the fact that the office of Commander-in-Chief was out of date.

Conclusion

The Victorian British Army was unique among the great powers in that it spent the majority of the nineteenth century constantly engaged in warfare, albeit of a unique nature. As a consequence it had to remain a rather fluid organisation as it knew not what part of the vast British Empire it would be fighting in next. The question remains whether a better organisational structure could have been formed that would have successfully enabled both preparations for fighting a European war and continued imperial expeditions. In a strange way this was tried in that the reserve forces in the British Isles were prepared, to the extent they were prepared at all, to face any European foe that attempted invasion. The problem was that the preparation did not amount to much, and there were never enough trained soldiers stationed in Britain to

deal with any such invasion. A wider system for the regular army that combined European war and Imperial war readiness could have been possible. The problem was that it would have concerned an increase in the army estimates, and there was constant pressure from the Treasury on every Secretary of State for War to reduce the estimates; or would have required the implementation of conscription, which was out of the question during this era. No matter what successive governments said about the likelihood of having to fight a European war, it was appreciated by many soldiers and politicians that this might be necessary. The South African War led to large-scale reform in the British Army and ultimately the establishment of the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F), which was largely set up to fight in Europe.

What is often most remembered about the colonial campaigning of this period are the notable defeats, such as Maiwand, Isandlwana and Majuba. Denis Judd's assertions that for each defeat there were numerous decisive victories maybe true, but it ignores the question as to whether such defeats should, because of technological superiority, ever have happened. However whilst history has remembered the defeats it has to be said that many of the successes of the period were given exaggerated praise by the Victorian press. That there were tactical failings in the British army is undeniable, but this could never be resolved whilst so little thought, largely due to the want of a Chief of Staff and a General Staff, was given to the preparation for future conflicts.

During this period there was a growth in the number of soldiers who saw it as a profession rather than merely a duty. There were an increasing number of officers who took their profession seriously, studied, and prepared for it. This is clearly seen through the expansion of such organisations as the United Service Institute and the Royal Artillery Institution. Unfortunately men of such calibre rarely achieved high

office during this era. Often they found their niche in an administrative post and never moved on because they were considered too valuable. Moreover the system of awarding high military office to those who had distinguished themselves in the field, regardless of the suitability for such office, continued to deny the more intellectual soldier high office. Indeed this is what makes Brackenbury's career so unique. He achieved important positions, partly because of his connection with Wolseley and because in general he was liked by politicians who admired his prodigious work rate, but also because he had developed a reputation as an intellectual officer who could sort out departments suffering from deficient organisation.

Brackenbury's background and social status meant that his path into the army was common enough. However it was perhaps not a logical one. Although his intellectual ability was still to develop fully there was enough to suggest that he could perhaps have been better suited to an alternative career. His decision to join the army obviously have a lot to do with the fact that he had failed to take to the law but was undoubtedly influenced by his brother Charles's recent decision to join the army.

There is also a wider point to be made concerning the Royal Artillery. Henry Brackenbury recorded that he visited his brother on several occasions after Charles had entered the Royal Artillery. This certainly influenced his decision. He must have seen something in the life that appealed to him. It might also be that the more 'scientific' nature of the Royal Artillery appealed to him. This leads to an interesting point, that to an extent is beyond the scope of this thesis, but deserves acknowledgement. Both the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers were called the 'scientific' corps of the army. The 'science' of their work meant that a degree of intelligence and study was required. There is surely a correlation between this and the

prevalence of artillery and engineering officers amongst the pantheon of Victorian military heroes. Gordon, Kitchener and Roberts, amongst others, all came from the 'scientific' side of the army. If Brackenbury was to join the army this was undoubtedly where he would be best suited. However the army remained an institution that generally looked down upon study, and artillery and engineer officers remained the scorn of cavalry and infantry officers.

Although there were periods of great activity, such as Cardwell and Stanhope's tenures in office, the whole period was one of continuous military reform. The significance and importance of this is often lost as the second half of the nineteenth century started with a disastrous war, the Crimean, and finished with one, the South African War. This often detracts from the significance of the improvements that took place. Indeed it ought to be remembered that the Royal Commissions that investigated the South African War concluded that if the Hartington Commissions proposals had been accepted then the disaster of South Africa might not have taken place.⁷⁰ So the momentum for effective reform was there, even if there was often pressure from the forces of entrenched conservatism to prevent it from being carried through.

Notes

¹ Bond, Brian 'The Late Victorian Army', *History Today* 11:9 (Sept 1961), pp616. See also Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp.61-62. Spiers includes the permanent establishment in India in his figures. The British Army was responsible for providing approximately 70,000 men for the garrisoning of India.

² All figures taken from Woodward, David *Armies of the World 1854-1914* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd, 1978).

³ Harries-Jenkins, Gwyn *The Army in Victorian Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977). Also see Rudyard Kipling's poems 'Tommy' or 'The Absent minded Beggar' which gives a very accurate, if dramatic, account of how the common soldier was treated by society at large.

⁴ Bond, Brian 'Recruiting the Victorian Army 1870-92' *Victorian Studies* 5 1961.

⁵ Bond, Brian 'The Late Victorian Army', pp617. This included the Secretary of War, Secretary at War, Master General of the Ordnance, the Home Office, the Colonial Office, the Treasury, e.t.c

⁶ Bond, Brian 'The Late Victorian Army', pp618.

⁷ Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform' Part V *Frasers Magazine*, Vol 76 (1867), pp206-208.

⁸ Bond, Brian 'The Effect of the Cardwell Reforms in Army Organisation' *Royal United Service Institution Journal*: 105 (Nov 1960), pp517

⁹ It will be noted that this refers to the mobilised strength of the nations of men with military training.

- ¹⁰ There was at this time a debate within the army between the 'Imperialist' and 'Continental' schools of thought, on which more is said later in the chapter.
- ¹¹ Bond, Brian 'The Late Victorian Army', pp624.
- ¹² Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army*, chapter 10 & Judd, Denis *Someone has blundered: Calamities of the British Army in the Victorian Age* (Moreton-in-Marsh: Windrush Press, 1999), p.xiii.
- ¹³ Judd, Denis *Someone has Blundered*, p.xiii.
- ¹⁴ Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army*, p.272.
- ¹⁵ Stone, Jay *The Boer War and Military Reforms* (London: University Press of America, 1988), p.25.
- ¹⁶ O'Brien, Jim 'The Second Anglo-Boer War: Getting There' *Soldiers of the Queen, Journal of the Victorian Military History Society*, Issue 112 (March 2003).
- ¹⁷ Bond, Brian 'The Effect of the Cardwell Reforms in Army Organisation', p.515.
- ¹⁸ Bond, Brian 'The Late Victorian Army', p.619.
- ¹⁹ Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army*, p.4.
- ²⁰ The M.P in question was Mr Leathem member for Huddersfield. Bond, Brian 'Prelude to The Cardwell Reforms, 1856-68' *Royal United Service Institute, Journal* 106 (1961), pp229.
- ²¹ Bond, Brian 'The Effect of the Cardwell Reforms in Army Organisation', p.517.
- ²² Bond, Brian 'The Late Victorian Army', pp.619-620.
- ²³ Bond, Brian 'The Late Victorian Army', p.619.
- ²⁴ Spiers, Edward, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.15.
- ²⁵ Although Queen Victorian and the Duke of Cambridge both opposed the abolition of the purchase system they also appreciated the dangerous ground they were on constitutionally, had they not enforced the will of the House of Commons. If they had not Cardwell threatened to allow the House of Commons the opportunity to debate the future of the Duke of Cambridge with the very real threat that he might be removed.
- ²⁶ Harries-Jenkins, Gwyn 'The Army in Victorian Society', Chapter 5.
- ²⁷ Hamer, W.S *The British Army Civil-Military Relations 1885-1905* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p.17. Hamer's assertion that Brackenbury was promoted by merit does ignore the fact that he was largely dependent upon the patronage of Wolseley, and it is right to question whether Brackenbury would have risen to the level he did without such patronage.
- ²⁸ Cardwell, although troubled by the Duke, did defend him publicly, and genuinely, from the attacks of 'radical' liberal M.P's.
- ²⁹ Specifically on the long road to the removal of the Duke from office see Bond, Brian 'The Retirement of The Duke of Cambridge' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*. 105 1960. For the military career of the Duke, there has been nothing else on the scale of Verner, Col W *The Military Life of the H.R.H George Duke of Cambridge* 2 volumes (London: John Murray, 1905).
- ³⁰ Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army*, pp.6-8.
- ³¹ Cardwell to Gladstone, 27th February 1869 Gladstone Papers, British Library, Add 44119.
- ³² See Bond, Brian 'Recruiting The Victorian Army 1870-92' *Journal of Victorian Studies* 5 1961.
- ³³ Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army*, pp.20-23. Also entire Chapter entitled 'The Cardwell Reforms'
- ³⁴ Bond, Brian 'The Effect of the Cardwell Reforms in Army Organisation', p.520.
- ³⁵ Bond, Brian 'The Late Victorian Army', p.621.
- ³⁶ Whilst most works on the late Victorian army touch on the work of Stanhope, undoubtedly the most significant work concerning his time at the War Office is that of Ian Beckett, who in many ways has championed the importance of Stanhope tenure as Secretary of State. See in particular 'Edward Stanhope at the War Office 1887-1892' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 5 (1982), pp.278-307. 'The Stanhope Memorandum of 1888: A Reinterpretation' *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 57 (1984), pp.240-247. Added to this, three chapters in his book *The Victorians at War* (London: Hambledon & London 2003) Chapters 14,15 & 16 are based on the aforementioned articles.
- ³⁷ The official name was *The Royal Commission appointed to enquire into the system under which patterns of Warlike Stores are adopted and the stores obtained and passed for Her Majesty's service* (1887) H.M.S.O, London. It was commonly called the Stephen Commission, after its Chairman Sir James Fitzjames Stephen. The Report of the Stephen Commission is interesting when compared to that of the Hartington Commission, of which more will be said in a later chapter. Both looked at the same problems but whereas the Stephen Commission concluded that the problems stemmed from the concentration of too much power in the hands of one civilian, namely the Secretary Of State for War, the Hartington Commission concluded that the problems were created by too much power in the hands of one soldier namely the Commander-in-Chief.

³⁸ *Memorandum of the Secretary of State relating to the Army Estimates 1888-1889* (1888) Cd 5303. LXVI, 4.

³⁹ Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army*, pp.46-47. Wolseley, as was his wont, got slightly carried away in his criticism and stated that the problem was due to the system of party governance, decrying it as 'the curse of modern England'. Needless to say this made him unpopular with the political establishment and earned him an official rebuke from Stanhope.

⁴⁰ Although historically always known as the Stanhope Memorandum it was in effect merely a copy of Wolseley's recommendations of January 1888, which had probably been prepared with the assistance of Brackenbury as it was the latter's desire to create a mobilisation scheme that gave fresh impetus to the long-term request for such a list of priorities. The only alteration was that the army would be at a two corps standard rather than the three suggested by Wolseley.

⁴¹ Although originally written in 1888 in response to Lord Wolseley, it was later reissued on 1st June 1891. Yet it was never published until 1901, as part of the response to allegation coming out of the South African War that there had been no military planning or set of established purposes for which the Army was maintained.

⁴² Gooch, John *The Plans of War* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp.12.

⁴³ For further details of the extent of the employment of the Army in support of the Civil power see Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army*, Chapter 8 'Military Duties in the United Kingdom'.

⁴⁴ See, Webb, J.V 'Trouble in the 2nd Grenadier Guards in 1890' *Soldiers of the Queen, Journal of the Victorian Military Society* Issue 95 (December 1998). The military-political establishment seems to have taken this extremely seriously because it was a guards Battalion.

⁴⁵ Beckett, Ian *The Victorians at War*, pp.134.

⁴⁶ For a good analysis of the development and work of continental general staffs see Bond, Brian *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), Chapter One 'The Development of military professionalism and the rise of General Staffs in the nineteenth century'.

⁴⁷ The major work in this area was done by Howard Bailes in his article 'Patterns of Thought in the Late Victorian Army' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 4, No1, (March 1981), pp29-45.

⁴⁸ Hale, Colonel Lonsdale 'The Spirit of Tactical Operations of Today' *Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution* 16 (1889), pp449-464.

⁴⁹ Hale, Colonel Lonsdale 'The Study of Military History by the Regimental Officers of the Army' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute* 20, (1876), pp522.

⁵⁰ Bailes, Howard 'Patterns of Thought in the Late Victorian Army', pp.40-41.

⁵¹ Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army*, p.21.

⁵² Callwell, Charles. E *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: H.M.S.O, 1896), p.21. This work was probably the closest thing there was in the Late Victorian era to a theoretical military textbook. Originally published in 1896 it was revised and republished several times, most recently in 1996 by University of Nebraska Press.

⁵³ Maguire, T.M 'Our Art of War as "Made in Germany"' *United Service Magazine* (13 April-Sept 1896), pp126.

⁵⁴ Jay Luvaas devotes a whole chapter to Edward Hamley in *The Education of an Army* (London: Cassell, 1965), pp130-168. This is a well-balanced account that focuses on both his strengths and weaknesses and gives the best account of his quite public falling out with Wolseley.

⁵⁵ Bailes, Howard 'Patterns of Thought in the Late Victorian Army', p.34.

⁵⁶ Anon 'Army and Navy Magazine No.8 (May-Oct 1884), pp.140-144.

⁵⁷ More detail on such planning is given later in the Chapter on Brackenbury's time in India.

⁵⁸ Indeed many of Brackenbury's proposed reforms such as the creation of a General Staff and a quota system for promotion from the ranks, were too radical for Wolseley.

⁵⁹ Colonel Willoughby Verner *The Military Life of H.R.H George, Duke of Cambridge*, this remains the best account of the life of the Duke, largely because of the unrestricted access to the correspondence of the Duke that Verner was allowed. Verner was undoubtedly an admirer of the Duke but his work is not without criticism of the Duke. He does however try, and to an extent, succeeds in painting a more balanced portrait of the Duke, than the 'blimp' like reactionary image that is generally held.

⁶⁰ Bond, Brian: *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, p.76.

⁶¹ Gleichen, Major-General Lord Edward *A Guardsman's Memories* (London: William Blackwood, 1932), p.141.

⁶² Gleichen, Major-General Lord Edward *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.141.

⁶³ *Preliminary and Further Reports of the Royal Commissioners appointed to Enquire into the Civil and Professional Administration of the Naval and Military Department and the Relation of those Departments to each other and to the Treasury* (Hartington Commission) C. 5979 (1890). Ppxxi-xxiii.

⁶⁴ Bond, Brian 'The Retirement of the Duke of Cambridge' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*. 106, (1961), p.546. Queen Victoria's anger seems to have had more to do with the fact that this had emanated from a Conservative Government.

⁶⁵ Bond, Brian 'The Retirement of the Duke of Cambridge', pp.546-7.

⁶⁶ The Duke of Connaught was actually a very professional soldier, who studied his profession most seriously. Unlike, and partly as a consequence of the Duke of Cambridge, the Duke of Connaught found that his Royal connections held him back. He was kept in reserve when he led the Guards Division in Egypt, for Wolseley's fear that he might be killed, which would even further alienate Wolseley from the Crown. He was also kept out of most high military offices because of Government intervention. After their experience of the Duke of Cambridge there was natural reticence to have another Royal Commander-in-Chief.

⁶⁷ Bond, Brian 'The Retirement of the Duke of Cambridge', p.549.

⁶⁸ A further irony was that it was the Liberal Government of Campbell-Bannerman who would create the first Chief of Staff for the army in 1904.

⁶⁹ Brian, Bond 'The Retirement of the Duke of Cambridge', p.544.

⁷⁰ Both the Elgin and Esher Commissions suggested this. The Esher Committee went so far as to assert this directly. This quotation is used later in the thesis. *Report of the War Office Reconstitution Committee* (Esher Committee). Part I (1904) H.M.S.O, London, p.161.

The Product of an Intellectual Soldier: The literary work of Henry Brackenbury

Introduction

No other Victorian soldier produced the same amount, and variety, of literature as Brackenbury. His five books were only a small part of his writing¹. He wrote numerous articles for the weekly and monthly journals of the day - not all on military matters - as well as a considerable amount for the daily press. It will also be remembered that during his time as Professor of Military History at Woolwich he was producing a large number of lectures, many of which were unfortunately never published and have not survived. This chapter will look at the literary output of Brackenbury and how it was an important part of his life for many years.²

The Need to Write

Brackenbury's literary career started out of boredom, and continued partly out of necessity but also because he found great benefit from it. In 1864 Brackenbury was appointed Assistant-Instructor in Artillery at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. He found that in his new appointment he had a great deal of spare time, due to him having two days a week free from the class-room along with Easter, Summer and Christmas vacations. On the recommendation of his Colonel he decided to put this to good use by writing on the history of artillery.³ He produced two papers on the subject of "Ancient Cannon in Europe".⁴ Whilst doing this the same Colonel who had recommended he undertake his studies in the first place approached him and asked if he would contribute to the military articles in the latest edition of Brande's *Dictionary of Literature, Science, and Art*. This became Brackenbury's first paid writing work and put him in contact with the publisher William Longman who commissioned him to write an article on 'Warfare in the Middle Ages'⁵. During this

period he was also asked by Longman to edit a book by Major-General Michael Smith on *Drill and Manoeuvres of Cavalry combined with Horse Artillery*. This well thought out and scientific work impressed Brackenbury and it was through this book that he first saw the possibility of using his new found writing ability to put forward his own ideas. Once again thanks to Longman he found the opportunity through a meeting the latter had organised with J.A.Froude, the editor of *Fraser's Magazine*. His first article for *Fraser's* was on 'Operations against Charleston', during the recent American Civil War. His next publication for *Fraser's* was a series of articles on Military Reform⁶.

Whilst Brackenbury's literary contributions allowed him to explore the issues surrounding military reform and to express his ideas on all manner of military and non-military subjects they did have a wider benefit. Being the fourth son of a fairly minor landowning family he had virtually no private means. This was a severe drawback at a time when an officer's pay was insufficient to meet the cost of the lifestyle they were expected, and in some cases required, to keep. Brackenbury had now found a way of supplementing his pay, which at the same time helped to build his reputation as a thinker and reformer within the army. Brackenbury's private circumstances explain not only his literary career but also the publications for which he wrote. A comparison can be made with his brother Charles, who was also an officer. Although the third son, the untimely deaths of his elder brothers meant that he would inherit the family estate. Charles shared many of his brother's reformist and intellectual ideals. Yet due to his financial circumstances he wrote most of his articles for the 'trade', his articles appearing in the *United Services Journal*, the *Royal Artillery Journal*, and the *Army Magazine*, amongst others.⁷ Henry on the other hand wrote rarely for such publications, instead writing for the popular press. In other

words those who would pay.⁸

Along with writing for many leading Victorian periodicals he also formed a strong association with some daily newspapers. In 1867 *The Standard* employed him to write a series of occasional articles on military matters, his first being on the subject of ‘Corporal Punishment in the Army’.⁹ This association also included articles for *The Morning Herald* and *The Evening Standard*, which were owned by the same proprietor. His connection with *The Standard* continued until he went to the continent to work for the National Aid Society in 1870, and their association ended badly.¹⁰ In late 1876 he began a connection with *The Daily Telegraph*, which was to see him contribute occasional articles, most of which, due to their highly politicised nature, were written under the penname of ‘Anglophile’. This later led to a brief association with the newspaper *The World* in the late 1870s. Some of his work was extremely well paid. In May 1877 he was approached to write an article for *The Illustrated London News*, about the ongoing Russo-Turkish War. As Brackenbury said, “I thought the terms offered insufficient, and was not anxious for the work, as I had plenty to do”.¹¹ Hoping that they would not accept, Brackenbury demanded 100 guineas for the article, which to his surprise was agreed. He went on to write an article entitled ‘The Armies of the Contending Powers and a description of the Theatre of War’. Although the fee was exceptional it does illustrate the fact that Brackenbury was capable of making a considerable amount of money out of his literary career. What it also gave him was a chance to highlight his credentials as an army reformer.

Army Reform

Unsurprisingly this was an area in which he was particularly prolific. The most

notable of these were the series on Army Reform that he produced for *Fraser's Magazine*.¹² Brackenbury spoke his mind during this series of articles, often being highly critical of governments and soldiers alike. As he conceded early in his first article he was likely to gain the enmity of Horse Guards and the War Office for his comments. He was using these articles, in a magazine within the public rather than the military domain, to urge that military reform would have to come from outside the army. Military discipline limited the extent to which soldiers could criticise the military workings of the state. He was taking a considerable risk, perhaps even jeopardizing his own career, by being critical of the army and the government. Officers who write for public consumption have never been well thought of by the army, especially when the officer concerned is writing for financial gain. However this is not confined to the military and any junior member of an organisation who is publicly critical is unlikely to be thanked. His lack of experience was also an issue. His active service was limited to a brief experience in the Indian Mutiny, where he had been part of the relief sent from England, but had been invalided home before the end of the conflict. His administrative experience was as Adjutant of the Royal Artillery in the western district and in his current position as Assistant Instructor in Artillery at Woolwich. So, he was a young inexperienced officer offering grand opinions on the state of the army, both militarily and politically. Brackenbury's decision to write this series of articles should be viewed in this context.

There were five articles published between December 1866 and August 1867. The date of these is significant as it is before Edward Cardwell had entered the War Office and commenced his programme of reforms. Not only did they predate the Cardwell Reforms but also Brackenbury's association with Wolseley. They are published at a

time when the army and the government were still coming to terms with the failures that the Crimea War had highlighted. A series of piecemeal reforms of the army had been introduced and were being continued. The most notable of Brackenbury criticisms was that he felt the reforms rushed through during and in the immediate aftermath of the war were hampering any further change.

During the war itself Lord Palmerston's new government had undertaken the dismantlement of the existing military system. In effect there were several government departments and ministers responsible for the army. The Home Office was responsible for the army at home, along with the militia and the yeomanry. The army abroad was the responsibility of the Colonial Office. There existed both a Secretary at War and a Secretary of War. There also existed the Board of Ordnance which had a separate responsible for the Artillery. As Brackenbury said,

In one swoop, during war with one of the great powers, the whole of these immense interests were removed from the control of the officers in which they had hitherto been vested, and were consolidated or rather heaped together in a mass under a Secretary of State for war, who was made head of the new war department and the sole responsible officer for the entire administration of the army!¹³

The main problem that Brackenbury saw was the over-centralisation of the military machine; far too much responsibility, and therefore work, devolved on one man.

Brackenbury used the early deaths of Secretaries of State for War, Lord Herbert and Sir George Cornwall Lewis, as examples of the extreme pressure of the office.¹⁴ This was a prophetic statement as both Cardwell and Stanhope would also die as a result of the exhausting work of a long stay at the War Office.

His objections were not a defence of the old system, where he believed there had been too many people involved. He did however think that it had gone too far the other way in endowing one man with such demanding responsibilities. This would be borne

out by what happened during the tenure of both Cardwell and Stanhope where the organisation of the War Office was returned to a more balanced distribution, even if this did cement the supremacy of the Secretary of State over the Commander-in-Chief. One of Brackenbury's main points was the growth of administrative departments, pointing out that a large proportion of the army estimates "...goes to maintain an army of clerks in London, who only obstruct and delay business instead of furthering it".¹⁵ Whilst this has been an age-old cry of the soldier about civilian administration, it does have some legitimacy in the period in question given the huge reduction in the number of departments, but not the number of administrators, now responsible for the army. Brackenbury's skill lay in administration, although up to this point it had only been seen in his own regiment rather than the grander appointments that were to come, so he more than most soldiers recognised its importance. His complaints about bureaucracy should be seen in that light.

The success of the Prussian Army during the 1860s and 1870s meant that their unique military system became the envy of much of Europe. This was particularly true in Britain where many sought to copy it almost in its entirety.¹⁶ Brackenbury was less enthusiastic about the Prussian system than many of his contemporaries. Whilst he saw there were lessons to be learnt from the Prussians, it was clear to him that it was for the large part incompatible with the demands placed on the British Army. One of the key benefits of Prussian success in his eyes was the debate it had stimulated. As he wrote, "Just at present the public mind is more awake to military affairs than it has been for years past. The nation has been startled out of its slumber by the extraordinary successes of the Prussian Army, and has learnt that those successes have been due to provision and forethought".¹⁷ Maintaining the so-called 'balance of

power' in Europe had been a long-standing British preoccupation. Indeed at this time the annually renewed Mutiny Act stated in the preamble that the army was maintained largely to maintain the balance of power in Europe. Whilst this had become unworkable practically it was still the preoccupation of the foreign policy of successive governments. Prussia's military success, and the growing prospect of German unification, threatened the balance of power. Brackenbury urged that rather than adopt the Prussian system in its entirety "we must search and carefully examine how far the Prussian system would harmonise with the institutions of this country".¹⁸

Whilst he thought there were problems he did accept that "there is doubtless something very captivating in the results of the Prussian organisation".¹⁹ He recognised that it had been efficient and extremely cost effective, "a mere fraction of our expenditure on the Crimean campaign". The problem in his mind was that the system was reliant on compulsory service. This was totally unacceptable politically, and Brackenbury argued, liberal reform was also making it socially unacceptable.²⁰ However to Brackenbury there was a much wider problem than conscription, which concerned the demands that each nation placed upon its army. Both armies had the objective of defence of the realm, but this meant very different things. As Brackenbury explained,

With us the realm means not only England, not only Great Britain and Ireland, but immense tracts of territory in Asia, in Africa, in America, in Australasia, territories whose two hundred millions of inhabitants are no less than seven times as numerous as those of the United Kingdom itself, and to some of which the mere journey occupies months, during which the voyager is out of all possible communication with home.

Service in India for instance, which was where nearly 60,000 of the army was stationed, would be impractical for the conscript soldier as "the training of a recruit at home to fit him for foreign service, together with his voyages out and home, would

swallow up a large portion of his entire term of service”.²¹

Even in 1866 Brackenbury was asking for a formal definition of the duties of the army, explaining to his readers that no formal preparation could be made until one existed. He would again plead this case when Head of the Intelligence Branch, and for the same reason, namely so that plans for the defence of Great Britain and Ireland could be prepared. Whilst Brackenbury was dubious about the possibility, and indeed likelihood, of invasion he was practical enough to realise that it could happen. He questioned the policy of relying solely on the Royal Navy to prevent it, using the recent Battle of Lissa to prove that Naval superiority was never assured.²²

Brackenbury realised that with the many commitments in the empire it was impossible for an army of 150,000 or more to be kept in Britain on the off-chance of invasion. His answer was to reform the reserve forces. He envisaged a well trained body of reserves, militia and volunteers who if invasion ever happened would form the basis of an army to resist it. It is interesting to note that in 1866 he is in many ways envisaging the creation of the Territorial Army, which was not created until 1907. The idea that former or part-time soldiers would be asked to defend against the cream of an invading army does sound a little strange, but Brackenbury envisaged a reserve force that would be trained along the principles of the Prussian system. They would be grouped into local formations that would train together for part of the year. Reservists, volunteers and militia would form brigades and divisions that would not merely exist on paper but would be capable of taking the field fully supported by artillery, engineers and other support services. In his view they must to all intents and purposes be professional, if not full time, soldiers; as he wrote “we do not entrust the cure of our diseases to an amateur physician, nor the legal defence of our property to

an amateur student of law, and we cannot entrust our honour entirely to the keeping of amateur soldiers”.²³

This in Brackenbury's view was the lesson that could and indeed should be learnt from the Prussian system, namely that a reserve was not only desirable but also essential. A key problem with keeping reservists up to standard was that they found difficulty in gaining civilian employment. This was understandable as employers were hardly likely to want to employ someone who could be away training part of the year or could be recalled to the colours instantly. In a later issue on military reform Brackenbury did respond to this problem, and suggested that as many as possible should be found employment where the Government was the employer. His idea was sensible and was formed no doubt as a solution to the fact that compulsory service was impossible, but it had many problems. Perhaps this was a good case of Brackenbury the theorist, not being entirely realistic. The Government would never have supported an idea, which by its very nature would have been extremely expensive, albeit not as expensive as regular troops. His ideas were also perhaps a little before their time as at this stage there was no reserve to speak of, until after the Cardwell Reforms. It also envisaged the creation of storehouses, as places where supplies could be kept and the Army would congregate to meet any possible invasion, some twenty years before the creation of the 'Stanhope storehouses'. It can also be seen as a precursor to the creation of the Territorial Army in the aftermath of the South African War. All this is evidence of a soldier and officer who was thinking seriously about his profession and the ways in which it could be improved. If sometimes the 'theory' seemed a little naïve and unrealistic his lack of experience and relative youth - he was only twenty-nine when these articles were published - can explain that. At this stage he had no real experience outside his own regiment, and at

this point all he had seen of war was his short period in India during the mutiny. Despite this it is remarkable how many of the ideas he put forward during this period were to be put into practice many years later.

Soldier's welfare

This is one subject on which he was surprisingly active in his articles on military reform. Brackenbury was later criticised by Wolseley and Ian Hamilton for not caring about the conditions and welfare of the common soldier.²⁴ Yet the poor conditions that the soldier endured were a constant theme throughout Brackenbury's five articles on military reform, with one being dedicated entirely to the discussion of this subject. However Brackenbury's main concern was improving the quality of the recruit and therefore the efficiency of the army. Whether this was his only motivation is impossible to know, but it rings true of a man who was constantly looking towards making the army a more efficient organisation. Whatever his motives he did suggest ideas which would have considerably improved the lot of the common soldier. Some were later to be adopted, most notably the idea of shorter service and the abolition of flogging, together with the improvement of barrack rooms and facilities, which although they were never raised to the standard that Brackenbury had wanted, were dramatically improved during Stanhope's period as Secretary of State for War.

Brackenbury's starting point was the very real problem of recruiting, which had long existed.²⁵ At the time not only was there no discernable reserve but it was often impossible to meet the established level of the regular army. To Brackenbury the main problem in recruiting the necessary numbers were the conditions of service. It was also a constant theme of his articles that this was also discouraging a better class of recruit from coming forward. The problems were a combination of harsh conditions

of service and the social stigma attached to it, but also in Brackenbury's view there was no prospect of advancement. One of Brackenbury's more radical inducements to service was the suggestion that what would now be referred to as a quota system should be introduced where every fourth or fifth officer's commission should be reserved for a non-commissioned officer.²⁶ It was perhaps radical ideas such as this that led to the Duke of Cambridge to refer to him as "a very dangerous man".

There were more conventional inducements to service also suggested by Brackenbury, such as improved pay, rations and living conditions. On the subject of pay he recommended an increase in the basic pay but he was more concerned with ending many of the needless 'stoppages', so that the soldier had more money in his pocket.²⁷ He also used evidence to support the idea that this would reduce drunkenness, as the prevailing wisdom was that soldiers drank largely because they didn't have enough food. Another monetary inducement was the improvement of the army pension, which at that time stood at 8d a day after twenty-one years service.²⁸ The treatment of retired soldiers had recently been national news after the appearance in *The Times* of an article entitled 'Waterloo and the Workhouse'. Brackenbury wrote of a similar tale of a soldier who had served heroically throughout the Peninsular Campaign, had fought at the Battle of New Orleans, where he saved the life of his wounded officer, and subsequently the Battle of Waterloo. He had then gone on to serve in the West Indies and in the Portuguese Expedition of 1827-28. After leaving the Army he worked for the Dockyard Police. He and his wife were now in their seventies and reduced to living on 10d a day. Brackenbury finished off by saying, "Eight sieges and battles, including Waterloo; two forlorn hopes, a wounded limb; a commanding officer's life saved; twenty-one years services in Spain,

Belgium, America, the West Indies, and Portugal; and tenpence a day for a reward!". Whilst Brackenbury's comments were of an emotional nature his true colours, namely the efficiency of the army and the quest for a better class of recruit, were on display later in the article when he wrote that, "This matter of pension is of vital importance; and if we want soldiers, we must treat it in no niggardly spirit, remembering that every pensioner who goes back into civil life leavens his own neighbourhood with good or bad opinions of the army".²⁹ Brackenbury's recommendation was that the pension should start at no less than a shilling a day, returning it to the pre 1847 amount, which could rise to as much as 1s 6d per day for soldiers with good conduct or service before the enemy. This illustrates the intelligence with which Brackenbury wrote. Rather than making the case purely in the emotional vein, as so many did, he also made the case practically, by showing that the ill-treatment of soldiers, and a miserly pension were in effect bad public relations for the army. It created a negative view and hampered recruitment and, particularly for Brackenbury, it prevented the recruitment of a better class of soldier.

Brackenbury devoted a whole article to military discipline. Again this was a popular subject at the time, due to the case of Private Robert Slim who had died during a flogging. Debates in the House of Commons, during June 1867, had seen a motion passed by one vote to abolish flogging which the government had ignored. The resolution had caused panic in the government and, in the words of Brackenbury, "In three successive nights, the Secretary of State for War enunciated three distinct and totally different policies".³⁰ The result was that flogging had been abolished in time of peace except for mutiny and insubordination with violence. In itself Brackenbury felt that little good would come of this in terms of recruitment, but he argued that officers would now be more inclined to remove soldiers from the ranks for persistent bad

behaviour, and as a consequence a better class of recruit would be essential. Flogging was just one matter he touched on. He went into detail about the unfairness of the present regimental court system, the unsuitability of many officers for the task of presiding over such courts, and the general illegality of them when compared with the civil courts.³¹

Brackenbury did not only want a better class of recruit, but he also believed that he knew where such men could be obtained.

We have a race of hardy villagers and stalwart country lads fond of sport, of all games that require pluck and skill, a quick eye, a strong hand, and a fleet foot, to whom the spice of danger enhances the pleasure of such games as football and cricket, and who are ready to join in anything promising a chance of adventure. It would seem that a soldier's life is exactly the career suited to such as these; but the fact stares us in the face that these men will not come in any numbers to the army.³²

Brackenbury believed that if his recommendations in terms of pay, pension and conditions were enacted then such men would join the army. Whilst this would have removed many of the drawbacks to service it still ignored the social stigma attached to the army, which was only partly to do with money. There was still a wider dislike of militarism in any form that could not so easily be solved. There is no doubt that Brackenbury's recommendations would have improved the lot of the soldier and would have helped recruitment but he was perhaps naïve to believe that the type of recruit he sought would be induced purely by such changes.

Chief of Staff

His first article on 'Military Reform' had touched on War Office organisation but it was in the fifth that he set out many of his key ideas and reforms. It was here that he first championed the idea of a Chief of Staff, an important point to remember given that he was much criticised in 1890 when it was suggested that he put forward this

idea purely for personal gain. To him such an appointment was obvious. It would reduce the substantial workload of the Commander-in-Chief and Secretary of State for War, and would give the army much needed planning and strategy. If nothing else should have been copied from the Prussian successes it was surely this.³³ He recommended many alterations to the War Office administration, some of which he would enact as Director General of Ordnance between 1899-1904. A large problem in his opinion was the matter of supervision and control. It was impossible for one man, the Secretary of State, to do this for both the civilian and military side. The Commander-in-Chief was rapidly losing control over subordinate militarily controlled departments, a problem that attempts to rein in the Duke of Cambridge would exacerbate. There was a gap where a Chief of Staff should be. This lack of coordination and supervision was part of the reason for so many Royal Commissions and committees being established, a situation that would continue throughout the century. Writing in 1867 Brackenbury stated that in the last eleven years there had been,

Seventeen Royal Commissions, eighteen Select Committees of the House of Commons, nineteen committees of officers within the War Office, besides thirty-five committees of military officers, making a total of no less than eighty-nine committees and commissions, which have been held to consider one question or another, and in the majority of cases their reports have not been attended to at all, or at most only partially acted upon.³⁴

Parliament and the Army

Brackenbury returned to the subject of army reform when he wrote two articles for *Saint Paul's Magazine* in 1868. The first was on 'Parliament and Army Reform' and concentrated solely on the issue of the purchasing of commissions, a practice which was still in place. This was written in the last months of the Conservative government, and thus before Cardwell and the Liberal Party came to office.

Brackenbury was confident that the new government would abolish the purchase system. He noted that abolition now attracted more support in parliament than previously and that the press was now largely in favour. Brackenbury was very clear:

The whole issue lies in this. Is the army to be a profession or not? Are the officers to enter it with a view to making it the pursuit of their lives, and devoting their entire energies to military service; or are they to enter for a brief space as a pastime, and therefore, as a matter of course, not to look seriously upon their duties?³⁵

This view is similar to that taken by Cardwell a few years later when he wrote that, “Our principle is that the officers shall be made for the Army. Their principle is that the Army is made for officers”.³⁶ Both comments fitted into a wider feeling of a growth in professional society that occurred during the late Victorian era. For Brackenbury to suggest that ‘soldiering’ was a profession was to put it on a par with the medical and legal profession. It was therefore something that one should study and take seriously rather than to be seen as a duty of social status, or as Brackenbury put it, “a pastime”. Brackenbury also expressed a rather modern view about the nature of officership. Many who defended purchase did so in terms of social character, as he put it ‘pluck and courage’. Brackenbury espoused the view that courage before the enemy was only part of an officer’s duty; “the duties of war are rare and far between, and the duties of peace are constant, and ever at hand”.³⁷ It is very similar to the current creed of the British Army that states there is more to being an officer than behaving like an officer. Brackenbury’s point was that there was far more to being a good officer than many believed. It was more than merely having natural leadership and courage, whether this came from social background or not. The army was a profession and it was Brackenbury’s view that like any other profession it had to be studied and trained for and taken seriously. Active service played only a small part of an officer’s life.

The second article was entitled 'Our Army as it is, and as it should be'. This was clearly written as a response to the Prussian success against the Austrians in 1866 which had stimulated much debate in the British press. In it he provided an overview of the 'evils' of the present military system. Once again he expressed the view that the greatest problem facing the army was recruiting.³⁸ Once again Brackenbury took up the subject of promotion through the ranks. This time he argued that such a move was the natural progression from the opening up of the military colleges to anyone, rather than merely to those who were highborn. If there was no longer anything other than money preventing anyone becoming an officer surely, he argued, those who already had experience of the army were ideal candidates.³⁹ In this article he referred to the fact that those few NCOs who were commissioned as officers were often treated, "as a kind of outcast from the society of his brother officers....if a third of the officers had thus risen, such social ostracism could no longer exist. And, indeed, it is probable that a very superior class of men would be promoted".⁴⁰ The promotion of officers through the ranks was a continual theme in Brackenbury's writing on the state of the army. The two main benefits he saw were that it would improve the class of recruit if there was a reasonable possibility of a commission and that it would further improve the efficiency of the army because such men would naturally have a more professional attitude. There is a question as to whether either of the desired effects would have occurred, but Brackenbury made a compelling case that was supported by the example of the French Army where such a system was in place. At this time the French Army was still held up as an example by many in the British military establishment, in a way that the Prussians were starting to be at this time and would further be after their success in 1870.

One possible drawback to promotion through the ranks was money. An officer's pay was insufficient to meet the array of expenses that occurred whilst still providing a living wage. Thus some form of private income was always necessary. The reason for this was that officers pay had not been altered for quite some time. Again this reflected the 'amateur ideal' that officers should not be making money out of serving the crown. Competitive rates of pay with other professions were unacceptable, partly because of cost but also because of the fear that this would create a professional military spirit which was considered by Victorian society to be both unacceptable and dangerous. The problem was that, whilst pay had not been altered since 1806, Brackenbury estimated that an officer's costs had increased by 50% over the same period.⁴¹ Obviously any improvement in pay was dependent upon the abolition of the purchase system otherwise professional officers would be barred by financial limitations.

It was in this piece that he included some equally outspoken comments upon military expenditure. For those who wanted a reduction there was a simple alternative, namely the introduction of conscription. This would give the country a cheap standing army and a considerable trained reserve and would allow further adoption of elements of the Prussian system. Brackenbury realised that this was extremely unlikely; therefore the alternative was a more expensive, smaller, volunteer army. In this case the only way in which expenditure could be reduced was "by placing all our military institutions, recruiting and promotion especially, on a sound and honest footing".

Whilst his words alluded to the corruption that undoubtedly existed, especially when it came to recruitment, it was more importantly a call for efficiency. He felt that the number of officers could safely be reduced and that the double administration of the

War Office and Horse Guards could be ended. To an extent the latter was achieved during the Cardwell reforms, but the reduction in expenditure was negligible. The much wider point was that without conscription an army adequate for home and imperial defence would always be an expensive operation. As Brackenbury wrote, "If Englishmen will not pay in person for the defence of England's possessions, they must pay in purse".⁴²

Brackenbury was one of the imperialist school of writers, who felt that the uniqueness of the British position and their differing commitments called for an altogether different military system. He therefore did not fall into the trap of many military writers of wanting to copy excessively the practices of one of the great military powers of Europe. There were parts that Brackenbury admired in the Prussian system, namely their reservist system and localisation, and similarly parts he admired in the French system, most notably promotion through the ranks. His key aim was always to promote reforms that would, in his view, increase the efficiency of the army. That such recommendations were often radical was not necessarily his intent. Like Wolseley, being seen as a reformer and a 'radical' he was often associated with the Liberal party and liberal views. However neither had any affinity with the Liberal Party, indeed Brackenbury grew to hate them for the stall in his career they had caused. He was basically a conservative both politically and socially.⁴³ So when he recommended liberal and radical policies it was merely in what he saw to be the best interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of the army. Yet he was classed as a radical reformer, most notably by the Duke of Cambridge, and was therefore "a very dangerous man".

Campaign Memories ⁴⁴

After Brackenbury's service in the Ashanti War his work for the press declined dramatically, yet his literary career continued apace. After the conclusion of the conflict Brackenbury approached Wolseley about writing a narrative of the campaign. Wolseley agreed, and on his return Brackenbury put his proposal to publisher John Blackwood who recommended that if such a book was to be a success it would have to be published as soon as possible whilst public interest was still aroused. The ensuing writing, editing and publishing was a Herculean effort, and in only six weeks the book was completed! *The Ashanti War*, first published in 1874 in two volumes, was a contemporary success and has remained the best account of the campaign. The reason for its success was probably best summed up by W.B. Cheadle's review in *The Academy*.⁴⁵ He noted that by the end of 1874 five works on the Ashanti Campaign had been published. With the exception of Brackenbury's they had all been written by special correspondents. The strength of Brackenbury's work was that it was the only one to concentrate on the military operations, rather than being a recollection of personal experiences. Obviously Brackenbury had the advantage of having been closely involved in the planning and organisation of the campaign and he also had access to the official papers from the War Office. This made his account uniquely authoritative. Whilst generally a glowing review, Cheadle did make two criticisms. Firstly, he felt that in some cases there was evidence of Brackenbury being too close to the events, and secondly, that he failed to make the necessary criticisms of certain mistakes and 'disasters', although perhaps the latter criticism is unfair as it was largely a faultless campaign. Cheadle undoubtedly had a point but it is very understandable that Brackenbury should not want to alienate Wolseley by an overly

critical account. At a time when Brackenbury was trying to advance his military career such an account would have been far from helpful. It does perhaps highlight the dilemma faced by a man who was both a soldier and a writer about military matters. Whilst wanting to produce an 'exciting' factual and descriptive account he also had to consider his own career and the consequences of being too analytical or critical. He would also have felt loyalty towards his comrades in the 'ring' and would have undoubtedly hoped to see further service with them.

His best-known works in this field dealt with the Ashanti Campaign and the Gordon Relief Expedition. He did, however, also write about a much smaller and less significant campaign conducted in South Africa. In November 1899 there appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* an article by Brackenbury entitled 'The Transvaal Twenty Years ago'. This dealt with the aftermath of the Zulu War in 1879 and the subsequent campaign against the Pedi Chief, Sekukuni. Brackenbury had accompanied Wolseley to South Africa when the latter had been appointed to supersede Lord Chelmsford, but much to Wolseley's chagrin Chelmsford had fought the decisive battle of the campaign before he had the chance to take command.⁴⁶ As a result all that was left for Wolseley to do was to quell the last elements of Zulu resistance and capture the Zulu King, Cetewayo. The campaign against Sekukuni was partly because of Wolseley's frustration at having missed the Zulu War. That is not to suggest that Wolseley was particularly bloodthirsty, but it was by successful service in the field that Wolseley enhanced his position within the Army and the State. It might also have been influenced by the fact that at the same time Wolseley's great rival Sir Frederick, later Lord Roberts was fighting a successful campaign in Afghanistan. This was certainly hinted at by Brackenbury in his article.⁴⁷ Sekukuni had been a constant problem to the Transvaal Government. He launched sporadic

raids on other tribes and on the Transvaal settlers and lived on the plunder of such exploits. After such raids he would retreat to his 'stadt' in the Lulu Mountains. Two previous expeditions had been launched against this stronghold, one by the Boers and one by the British. In August 1879 he had launched a raid on British settlers around Leydenburg, and this was all the justification Wolseley required for an expedition.

That it was successful where others had failed was largely due to the meticulous planning of Brackenbury, as Wolseley himself conceded. The other campaigns had failed because of inadequate supplies, water and horses. This was all in place when the campaign was launched. Despite Brackenbury's key role in the campaign he makes little mention of his part in the proceedings. Indeed it was left to Wolseley to give credit where credit was due and he placed on record that it was because of Brackenbury's work as Chief of Staff that the campaign had been brief and successful. Again this illustrates a pertinent point about Brackenbury's writing.

Whereas other writers would have made much of their personal contribution Brackenbury chose largely to ignore it or at the very least down play it. Partly this was a stylistic matter, as his narrative style of writing did not allow for this to the same extent that a more personal account of the campaigns would. Both this campaign and the Ashanti campaign were 'textbook' operations for this style of warfare. On each occasion Brackenbury had played a key part in their success. His own failure to comment on this may partly have been a recognition, or even acceptance, of an age that had yet to fully realise the importance of such matters, as he did not usually suffer from modesty. Brackenbury's own attempt to lead battlefield charges illustrates the point that this was where it was perceived that 'glory' lay rather than making the arrangements and plans that would allow a successful campaign. Many a campaign

‘failed’ during this period for want of adequate preparation and organisation, or more importantly because of a failure to recognise the vital necessity of such matters. It cannot be said that he used his writing as a way of seeking personal glory or to enhance his role in events.

Indeed in his final book on his military campaigns, *The River Column* first published in 1885, he refrained from comment or praise for any of the individuals concerned. As he wrote,

It would have been a pleasure to me to take this opportunity of praising those individuals to whom, in my opinion, such success as the Column attained is chiefly due; but my position demands so strict a neutrality that I have thought it right to avoid all words of praise, lest in any case their accidental omission might appear to impute the semblance of blame.

Again this supports the view that Brackenbury did not write for personal glory. Indeed Brackenbury stated that his own motivations were, in a sense, to provide a lasting record of an extraordinary military expedition.

I have written this simple narrative in the belief that the advance and return of four regiments of infantry through a hundred miles of cataracts and rapids in an enemy’s country deserve, as a military operation, some permanent record, and because death has removed the only other officers possessing sufficient knowledge of all details to write that record with accuracy.⁴⁸

Although he never wrote a major military thesis, such a work as this was a useful contribution to those who studied the ‘art of war’. It was a well-organised campaign in hostile territory, due to the enemy and also the difficulty of the terrain and climatic conditions. Whilst it has already been explained that he wrote largely for financial benefit, he was also writing to establish his reforming credentials. As a writer he was also capable of exerting a wider influence. We have already noted Brackenbury’s belief that reform of the army would have to come from outside. Clearly the forum for this was the House of Commons. The type of publication Brackenbury wrote for was

widely read by the members of that house. It is inconceivable that Brackenbury did not realise the scope of his influence, therefore it is clear that rather than just writing for financial gain or career advancement he was also writing to influence army reform.

Brackenbury never touched on the controversy that the campaign provoked. His was purely a military and logistical account of a quite remarkable military manoeuvre. In a sense this was perhaps a mistake when others, most notably Ian Hamilton, were criticising Wolseley, and by association Brackenbury, for their failure to reach Khartoum and relieve General Gordon. Brackenbury could have exonerated himself by the disclosure that the decision to withdraw had not been his, but a direct order from Wolseley. The River Column, which he commanded had not been designed or equipped to raise the siege of Khartoum, and it had also been dangerously undersupplied so that withdrawal was necessary if further supplies were not forthcoming. As an account of a military operation it was interesting and its republication in the 1990s for the U.S Military illustrates the lasting value of such a work.

Military Tactics

A criticism levelled at Brackenbury is that despite his prolific writing and his promotion of intellectual soldiering he never wrote a major theoretical work.⁴⁹

Cynically it could be suggested that this was because there was no financial gain in such a book but the truth is probably that, whilst there was perhaps a need for such a work, there was no demand. Within the Army itself an amateur ethos still existed, and little value was placed on studies of military history or contemporary tactics.

Brackenbury himself had experience of this. Lt-Colonel G.F.R Henderson, Professor

of Military History at the Staff College had written a notable work entitled *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War*. Jackson's tactics during the war had given him a somewhat legendary status and the book did well commercially. However, despite its tactical interest Henderson told Brackenbury that, "Beside yourself, only one other General, or even Colonel, on the active list has said a word about the book to me".⁵⁰ It was a clear illustration of the lack of interest in such matters that existed at the time. Further evidence of this can be found in Colonel Lonsdale Hale's lecture and subsequent article for the Royal United Service Institute, in 1891, on "The Professional Study of Military History", delivered largely as a criticism of the unprofessional nature of the officer corps and their dislike of study. Hale concluded that the average army officer, "found 'study' and 'history' bad enough by themselves, but when in juxtaposition, forming a combination absolutely detestable".⁵¹

This goes a long way to explaining why there was no distinctively British theoretical work on tactics. The closest was Charles Callwell's 'Small Wars', first published in 1896, but this looked purely at the colonial style of small wars. German literature and the Swiss-born writer Henri Jomini largely influenced other notable works, such as Edward Hamley's *Operations of War*, first published in 1866. Brackenbury recounted stories that illustrated the point that the majority of tactical and theoretical military history was being written for a small audience within the army. He did, however, write two articles, both for *St Pauls Monthly Magazine*, in 1867 and 1869, which dealt largely with the tactical side of his profession.

The first of these concerned itself with a review of 'The Military Armaments of the Five Great Powers'.⁵² In looking at the weaponry of the nations Brackenbury felt it natural to comment on the tactical application of such resources. His starting point

was the Paris Exhibition of 1867 which had seen an uncommonly high display of military equipment. Although all types of military hardware were covered at the exhibition there was a particular emphasis on artillery. This had gone through something of a revolution with the introduction of rifled guns, which had dramatically improved their distance and accuracy. He also wrote about the developments and benefits of the new breech-loading rifles. In a rare note of praise for British governments he commended the speed with which they had recognised the benefits of such a weapon and had appreciated the lesson of the Dansk-Prussian War long before the majority of European powers.⁵³ The fact that the decision had been to adapt and modify the Enfield rifle rather than adopt a completely new weapon also met with his approval. Brackenbury took the view that, as this was an emerging technology, it was far better to modify an existing weapon, thus giving the benefit of breech loading, and to await the further development of such technology.

Even in an article that was supposed to be largely about military technology and tactics Brackenbury came back to his continuing concern over recruitment in the British Army. His view was that as tactics and technology were changing so must the old idea that the soldier was, in his words, “a mere machine”. It was therefore necessary for Britain to change the practice of recruiting from the lowest members in society. As he wrote,

Other nations take the flower of manhood of the country for their armies, and the highest and lowest of their sons fight side by side in the ranks. Too independent to accept compulsory service even for our country, we yet are unwilling to pay the cost of our exemption, and instead of making the army the best of all professions, so as to attract men of intelligence and ability into its ranks, we seek only for how small a sum it is possible to get men of any stamp, and we lower our bidding till we can just fill our army with the dregs of our cities, and only raise the offer when even they cannot be drawn, even by the lies of a recruiting sergeant, into the ranks.⁵⁴

The subject of recruiting was one that he was particularly passionate about, and to

which he regularly returned. This is not surprising for someone who was concerned about efficiency in all that he did. At the heart of Brackenbury's passion on this subject was the fact that all his other suggested reforms would not work efficiently unless a settled and effective system of recruiting existed.

It is sometimes difficult to understand where Brackenbury stood on the issue of compulsory service. He never publicly advocated its introduction, not even when a popular movement in its favour was started with the support of Lord Roberts in the aftermath of the South African War. Perhaps this was because he believed that such a measure could never be accepted in peacetime. This view would certainly be supported by many of his articles on army reform. Yet he continually mentioned the idea in his writing with language which seems to suggest a longing for such a measure. Another interesting point from the passage quoted above is that relating to highest and the lowest serving together in the ranks. This only truly happened in the French army, and even then there were loopholes that could be exploited by those with power or money, yet Brackenbury emphasises the point in such a way as to make it sound as though this was the common practice in Europe. One possible reason for this can be found in his previous articles on army reform when he wrote that compulsory service was not only impossible in Britain for historical and political reasons, but also because of liberal reforms that had made such a measure almost impossible.⁵⁵ It could be argued that Brackenbury's concept of the highest and the lowest serving together side by side in the ranks was an attempt to appeal to liberal ideas of equality. Having said this it does seem unlikely that Brackenbury was in favour of compulsory service as there is no direct mention of his support for it, and he was certainly not reticent about expressing his views on other, perhaps even more

controversial, matters. Brackenbury may well have sought to make compulsory service seem more generally acceptable. If this was his view it is supported by the evidence of the South African War, where a large number of volunteers from all levels of society willingly served together in the ranks. It was perhaps hoped that those in power who were diametrically opposed to this idea would seek to improve the state of the army of voluntary service so as to avoid any pressure for compulsory service.

Brackenbury also wrote on 'The Influence of Modern Improvements Upon Strategy', again for *Saint Paul's Monthly Magazine*. This was during an era when there were several similar articles published.⁵⁶ The reason for this was that emerging technology, especially rifled artillery, had recently been demonstrated in action, most notably in the conflict between Prussia and Austria. There were also incidents in the Dansk-Prussian War that had highlighted the ability of the breech-loading rifle. However Brackenbury stated clearly that his aim was to look at strategy, which he defined as the movement of troops in war, rather than tactics, the art of handling troops in the presence of the enemy. The first elements he looked at were the electric telegraph and the influence of railroads. He recognised that this had particular significance for Russia, and if applied correctly would enormously increase Russia's role as a great power. The railroads in particular were important in that they had increased the ability to concentrate troops at any one point and the ability to keep them supplied. He gave various examples from the recent wars in Europe and the American Civil War, where tens and indeed hundreds of thousands of troops were moved, along with guns and equipments, quickly and efficiently for battle. All this meant that mobilisation which in the past had taken weeks or months now took a matter of days. He did, however, appreciate that this now meant that considerable numbers of troops had to be used to

protect the railroads. Brackenbury could not resist the temptation to compare this with the chaos caused in Britain when volunteers were moved to Brighton for manoeuvres, which required the closing of the railway for four days simply to prepare for one day's movement, consisting of troops only without the extra problems and delays of guns, horses and stores.⁵⁷ This was perhaps a somewhat unfair criticism, as unlike their state owned continental counterparts, British railways were largely private companies. It could also be argued that this was only a concern for European warfare. Rarely were railways used during the British army's colonial campaigns, and the likelihood of the army being significantly involved in a European war was considered slim.

He also highlighted the importance of the telegraph, using the example of the recent conflict between Prussia and Austria, where the King and the General Staff had been in constant contact with the Headquarters of the three army corps. Again, this was subject to attack by the enemy but he pointed out that in this case it was quick and easy to repair, unlike railroads. Another technological advance he noted was the use of steam to power shipping which now negated the need to wait for a favourable wind before landing or collecting troops, and had the obvious effect of speeding such transportation. Brackenbury used such advances in technology to once again press for improvement in the education of officers. An officer who understood and could apply such technologies would be able to move his troops around rapidly so as to increase the chance of catching his enemy off guard. This was the strategy that was now important and Brackenbury supported his views with the words of General Sir Charles Napier: "An ignorant general is a murderer. All brave men confide in the knowledge that he pretends to possess, and when the death-trial comes, their generous blood

flows in vain”. Brackenbury did sound a note of optimism, stating that he felt such things were beginning to be understood: “The day is not far distant when a man who combines ability with study may make certain of a career in the British army”.⁵⁸

This was as far down the road of theory and strategy that Brackenbury ever went. It might be suggested that Brackenbury’s main reason for not writing a major theoretical work was because he saw no financial gain in such an enterprise. Perhaps it is more pertinent to say that he was too busy writing for the popular press, which it must be remembered was vital to his financial security. Another point that needs to be made is that such a work would not necessarily have suited his style of writing. Brackenbury was at his best when writing a descriptive narrative. Even some of his official reports take on such a style, especially when he felt it necessary to give an account of how the present situation had arisen by filling in the background.⁵⁹

Conclusion

Frederick Maurice has often been referred to as the ‘pen’ of Lord Wolseley. On occasion this distinction is also given to Brackenbury. Whilst Wolseley undoubtedly used Brackenbury to tell the tale of his campaigns, as evidenced by the latter’s accounts of the Ashanti and Sudan campaigns, on army reform it must be remembered that Brackenbury wrote his articles long before any association with Wolseley, and whilst they shared opinions many of Brackenbury’s ideas would have gone too far for Wolseley’s liking. The obvious example of this is Brackenbury’s desire to replace the Commander-in-Chief with a Chief of Staff, as evidenced by Wolseley’s reaction to the recommendation of the Hartington Commission. Brackenbury’s reputation as a military reformer preceded his association with Wolseley because of his literary work and this perhaps goes some way to explaining

why his 'devotion' to the Wolseley 'ring' was not as strong as that of some of his contemporaries. Brackenbury's literary work had helped him to develop a career and reputation before he met Wolseley. On the other hand it must be added that Brackenbury would never have reached the heights he did if it had not been for Wolseley's patronage.

The financial imperative of Brackenbury's writing needs to be understood. It gave him the money he needed to maintain a military career. Maintaining the lifestyle expected of an officer was an expensive business. If this money had not been forthcoming he may well have taken one of the many job opportunities outside of the army that he was offered.⁶⁰ His literary career also gave him a means of advancement as it was the ideas he promoted in his articles which brought him to the attention of political and military reformers with whom he became associated. The fact that he had built up a considerable reputation can be seen not only by the reviews of his work but in the fact that he started to be approached to write on military subjects at considerable rates of pay. Whilst the payment of 100 guineas for one article, paid by *The Illustrated London News*, was exceptional it does show the level to which his reputation as a writer had risen. Editors were attracted by his ability to engage with the non-military reader. Virtually all his articles appeared in the popular press rather than 'trade' journals such as *United Service Journal*. He had a clear narrative style which, whilst largely free of military jargon, was still technical enough to engage the military reader.

His reputation as a writer moved him into new circles of associates, both socially and professionally. Socially he found himself mixing with some of the leading lights of the artistic scene of Victorian London, including Henry Irving, Arthur Sullivan and

W.H Russell. He was on good personal terms with John Blackwood, the editor of several periodicals, and continued this relationship with his nephew who succeeded him as editor. He also enjoyed good relations with other literary editors and proprietors including J.A Froude, William Longman, and Edward Lawson (proprietor and editor of *The Daily Telegraph* and later Lord Burnham). The fact that he was writing for 'general' publication also gave him an advantage in that his articles were being read and considered by the leading politicians of the day, who whilst they might not read the *United Service Journal*, were likely to read *Fraser's Magazine*, *The Fortnightly Review*, or *Blackwood's Magazine*.⁶¹ This undoubtedly benefited him, if only simply because of name recognition. It is doubtful that politicians were aware of many captains or majors who they did not know personally, yet Brackenbury's name may well have been familiar to many of them largely because of his writing.⁶²

One other important figure that it brought him into contact with was Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, the son of Queen Victoria. In November 1872 Brackenbury was still teaching at Woolwich when Prince Arthur's Secretary, Sir Howard Elphinstone, approached him about providing a series of lectures to assist the Prince in his study of military history.⁶³ The lectures were given at the Lord Warden Hotel in Dover, where the Prince was serving as an officer in the Rifle Brigade. The lectures were also attended by the officers of the garrison at Dover, which made for an interesting audience. The lectures were well received and Brackenbury received a letter of thanks from Queen Victoria saying how useful the Prince had found his lectures. As a result of these lectures Brackenbury was later invited to spend the weekend with the Prince. Brackenbury also used his friendship with the Prince when he asked him to preside over the lecture he gave to the Royal United Service Institution, thus helping to ensure a large attendance. The Prince's presence as chairman meant that the majority of the

War Office staff attended, including Wolseley. This is important in that it was shortly after this that the latter asked Brackenbury to accompany him on the Ashanti Campaign. Although they had met before this, the lecture undoubtedly further enhanced his reputation with Wolseley and meant that Brackenbury's name was fresh in his mind when he was selecting his staff for the campaign a few months later. All this had come about, directly or indirectly, because of Brackenbury's literary output.

A fitting summary of the importance of his literary career can be found in the final pages of his autobiography *Some Memories of My Spare Time*.

I attribute to a great extent whatever measure of success I had in my profession to it. It is not merely that to my pen I owed the means, which enabled me to keep my head above water, to buy books, to travel, and to study theatres of campaigns and battlefields, and the administration of foreign armies. Writing for the press compelled constant observation and constant work, preventing the brain from rusting. It brought me into contact with superior minds. It was my studies for this outside work that enabled me to take up the Professorship of Military History. It was my work for the press that brought about that connection with the Red Cross Society, which gave me my first insights into administration. It was this Red Cross work and my work as a lecturer, outside my professional duties, which brought me under the notice of Sir Garnet Wolseley, and so gave me my first employment as a staff officer in the field.⁶⁴

At the time of his writing the British army officer was still largely an amateur.

Although slightly exaggerated, the idea that being a gentleman of breeding and background was more important than making a thorough study of your chosen profession was still the majority view. This was starting to change at the time Brackenbury was writing. The Crimean War 'shook' some of the complacency out of the officer corps and the realisation that technology was making 'intelligence' and study as important as moral and physical courage was growing. Men like Edward Hamley, C.B Mayne, Francis Clery, W.H.James, J.F Maurice, George Colley, and even Wolseley, were developing literary careers and were studying their profession.

To borrow one of the phrases of D.S Macdiarmid this was ‘the dawn of scientific soldiering’.⁶⁵

Notes

¹ There is some debate over the number of publications that could actually be referred to as books. *The Dictionary of National Biography* includes amongst this number his lecture and Journal article entitled ‘The Tactics of the three arms’. I would not include this as a book. Often ignored is his book on the Franco-Prussian War, written in French, which was never published.

² The sheer scale and scope of Brackenbury’s literary output means that a full account is impossible within the boundaries of this thesis. It has been decided to concentrate on those articles that in particular refer to the themes of the thesis, such as army reform, military tactics, campaign memories, and anything else that reflects the military career of Brackenbury.

³ This was Colonel, later General Sir, J.H Lefroy, Director of the Advanced Class for Artillery Officers at Woolwich. He played a key part in the campaign for the adoption of rifled guns for the artillery, and was one of the officers approached by the Government for advice on the subject. He also wrote a paper calling for the creation of an artillery school, which led to its establishment at Shoeburyness.

⁴ It had been intended to write a third paper on the subject, but a fire robbed Brackenbury of his notes and sketches. As Brackenbury wrote, “I had neither time nor heart to commence over again, and I abandoned the subject”. The original hand written draft of the first two survives at the Royal Artillery Museum at Woolwich. This was his first literary contribution written under his own name. He had in September 1859 written a parody of Tennyson’s ‘May Queen’ for *Punch*.

⁵ This article was actually published in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in December 1866.

⁶ It is important to remember that these articles predated, and in some cases predicted, the Cardwell Reforms coming as they did before Cardwell entered office in December 1868. Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time* (London: William Blackwood & sons, 1909), pp.33-34.

⁷ Charles Brackenbury did write occasionally for newspapers, but never on the scale of his brother. Charles acted as military correspondent for *The Times* during the war of 1866, which saw Prussia and Italy, allied against Austria, but this was an exception to the rule.

⁸ The Blackwood Papers at the National Library of Scotland contain some details of the amount of money he was paid, and not just for his work for Blackwood’s. From these papers we know that Brackenbury was paid £300 for his book on *The Ashanti Campaign*, that for *The Illustrated London News* he was writing an average of 25 columns at four guineas a column, and that his work for *The Daily Telegraph* saw him paid £5 a column. Brackenbury to Blackwood 27th November 1874, Blackwood Papers, National Library of Scotland, MSS MS 4315 and Brackenbury to Blackwood 2nd June 1877, Blackwood Papers, National Library of Scotland, MSS MS 4356.

⁹ This was published in *The Standard* on Monday 18th March 1867. Brackenbury wrote that corporal punishment should only be used on active service, a view which the later Cardwell Reforms would make practice.

¹⁰ From the commencement of the Franco-Prussian War, Brackenbury had been writing a ‘Diary of the War’ that appeared in each days paper. The editor had wanted him to sign a formal contract, which Brackenbury had refused to do on the grounds that his military duties could take him away at any moment. When Brackenbury announced that he was leaving to work in Europe for the National Aid Society some rather acrimonious correspondence took place between the editor and Brackenbury. The upshot of it was that Brackenbury considered they would not welcome him in the future and thus the association ended.

¹¹ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.254-256.

¹² These articles appeared in *Fraser’s Magazine*, Volume 74, 75 & 76 in five parts from December 1866 to August 1867.

¹³ Brackenbury, Henry ‘Military Reform: Part V’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, Volume 76 (August 1867). Pp206-207.

¹⁴ Brackenbury, Henry ‘Military Reform: Part V’, p.209.

¹⁵ Brackenbury, Henry ‘Military Reform: Part V’, p.212.

¹⁶ Amongst these were Colonel Lonsdale Hale, F.N Maude, and Charles Brackenbury, Henry’s brother. There was slowly a reaction to this movement which united Ian Hamilton and Garnet Wolseley for probably the only time, in condemning the ‘slavish imitations from the Prussian’s’ as Hamilton put it in *The Fighting of the Future* (London: Kegan Paul, 1885), p.16.

-
- ¹⁷ Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part I', *Fraser's Magazine*, Volume 74 (December 1866), p.684.
- ¹⁸ Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part I', p.684.
- ¹⁹ Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part I', p.684.
- ²⁰ It is worth remembering that Prussia was in fact a smaller and less industrialised country than the United Kingdom. The population was about two thirds that of the United Kingdom and military expenditure was half that of the United Kingdom. Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part I', p.686.
- ²¹ Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part I', p.687.
- ²² At the Battle of Lissa in 1866 the more modern and numerically superior Italian fleet had been virtually wiped out by a supposedly inferior Austrian fleet.
- ²³ Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part I', p.689.
- ²⁴ In fairness it must be added that both men had their own motivations. Wolseley was at the time falling out with all the members of the 'ring' and had become rather bitter about their attitudes towards him. His relationship with Brackenbury was at this time rather strange. Reading his campaign journal and the letters he wrote to his wife during this period you can see instances where he bitterly attacks Brackenbury on one page and on the next is full of praise for him. By this stage Wolseley was suffering from bitterness and ill health. Ian Hamilton, although a personal friend of Brackenbury, was quite often extremely critical of him as a way of attacking Wolseley who he despised, and blamed for his lack of advancement.
- ²⁵ As Brackenbury wrote his first article a Royal Commission chaired by Lord Dalhousie was looking at the subject of recruiting. The recommendation led to the creation of the reserve act in 1867, which created a paper reserve that didn't exist in practice until the implementation of short service, as part of the Cardwell Reforms. Brackenbury was highly critical of the Royal Commission for ignoring such matters as food and living quarters as disincentives for recruitment.
- ²⁶ To an extent this was already done in the French Army, where a large number of officers came from the ranks. Many of the conservatives within the British army, most notably the Duke of Cambridge, thought this was a key reason for the failure of the French army against the Prussians, who of course were officered by 'gentleman'.
- ²⁷ 'Stoppages' was the term used to refer to money deducted at source for messing and washing expenses. This meant that whilst an infantry mans pay was 7s 7d a week, after stoppages he only had 2s 11d.
- ²⁸ Before the Army Service Act of 1847 the pension had been 1s a day after twenty-one years.
- ²⁹ Both quotations are from Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part II', *Fraser's Magazine*, Volume 75 (March 1867), p.289.
- ³⁰ Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part IV', *Fraser's Magazine*, Volume 75 (June 1867), p.743.
- ³¹ The details of his arguments are too extensive for this chapter. See Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part IV', pp.743-749.
- ³² Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part I', p.692.
- ³³ It is worth remembering the words of the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa who stated that if the recommendations of the Hartington Commission of 1890 had been enacted the disasters of South Africa could have been largely avoided. Key in this was the creation of a Chief of Staff.
- ³⁴ Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part V', p.211.
- ³⁵ Brackenbury, Henry 'Parliament and Army Reform', *Saint Paul's: A Monthly Magazine*, 78 Volume 2, (July 1868), p.457. Although the article was on the purchase system he did take the opportunity to reiterate his views on short service and commissions for NCOs.
- ³⁶ Bond, Brian 'The Late Victorian Army', *History Today*, 11:9 September 1961. Pp619.
- ³⁷ Brackenbury, Henry 'Parliament and Army Reform', p.457.
- ³⁸ This article appeared after the Royal Commission on recruiting had been published, but before it became clear that the recommendations were to be largely ignored.
- ³⁹ At the same time Brackenbury also suggested the possibility that in the future 'Hindoos', as he called them, might even be commissioned as officers in the British Army. Again this is an extremely radical suggestion, however it raises questions of race and ethnicity in the Victorian age, which are far beyond the scope of this thesis.
- ⁴⁰ Brackenbury, Henry 'Our Army as it is, and as it should be', *Saint Paul's: A Monthly Magazine*, 40 Volume 1 February 1868. p.610.
- ⁴¹ Brackenbury, Henry 'Our Army as it is, and as it should be', p.611. The pay scales for officers had been set in 1806 and would remarkably not alter until 1st January 1914.
- ⁴² Brackenbury, Henry 'Our Army as it is, and as it should be', p.613.

-
- ⁴³ Brackenbury's political conservatism is supported by the fact that he was once approached to become the chief election agent for the Conservative Party.
- ⁴⁴ The campaigns in question are talked about only when necessary to highlight a part of Brackenbury's literary career. For slightly more detail of the campaigns see Chapter on Brackenbury's Service in the Field.
- ⁴⁵ Cheadle, W.B 'The Ashanti War' (Book Review) *The Academy* 6 (July/December 1874), 3rd October 1874, pp.365-366.
- ⁴⁶ Wolseley later became very bitter about this. During an argument with the Government over when the end of the Zulu War should be recognised he made the statement that, "It was I and I alone who brought the Zulu War to a successful conclusion", and threatened to resign if the dates were not altered immediately. The War Office changed the dates to make the capture of the Zulu King as the official end of the war. See Kochanski, Halik *Sir Garnet Wolseley: Victorian Hero* (London: Hambledon Press, 1999), pp.101.
- ⁴⁷ Brackenbury, Henry 'The Transvaal Twenty Years ago', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol 166 (November 1899), p.731.
- ⁴⁸ Both quotations. Brackenbury, Henry *The River Column* (London: Blackwoods, 1885), pp.V-VI.
- ⁴⁹ This criticism was most recently made by Ian Beckett in *The Victorians at War*, Pp189, although it has also been eluded to by Howard Bailes *Patterns of Thought* and Brian Bond *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914*.
- ⁵⁰ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.86.
- ⁵¹ Hale, Colonel Lonsdale 'The Professional Study of Military History', *Royal United Service Institute Journal*, Volume 1 (1897), p.690.
- ⁵² The Five Great Powers were defined as Prussia, France, Austria, Russia and Great Britain.
- ⁵³ Brackenbury, Henry 'The Military Armaments of the Five Great Powers', *Saint Paul's: A Monthly Magazine*, (13) Volume 1 (November 1867), pp.190-191.
- ⁵⁴ Brackenbury, Henry 'The Military Armaments of the Five Great Powers', p.194.
- ⁵⁵ Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform: Part I', pp.685-686.
- ⁵⁶ Most notably Sir Patrick MacDougall's *Modern Warfare as Influenced by Modern Artillery* published in 1864.
- ⁵⁷ Brackenbury, Henry 'The Influence of Modern Improvements upon Strategy', *St Paul's: A Monthly Magazine*, (141) Volume 3 (March 1869), p.704.
- ⁵⁸ Brackenbury, Henry 'The Influence of Modern Improvements upon Strategy', p.713.
- ⁵⁹ A good example of this is the report Brackenbury wrote on the defence of India.
- ⁶⁰ It is worth remembering that he had initial legal training as a notary before entering the army. *Some Memories of My Spare Time* recounts several offers he received to work in the City or in politics.
- ⁶¹ In addition to which are the articles he wrote for the daily press, although it must be understood that many of these were written under a pseudonym so had little effect on his reputation.
- ⁶² The exact benefit of this is difficult to determine. The complication is that Brackenbury already know personally many future Secretaries of State for War, such as Stanhope, Campbell-Bannerman and Lord Hartington. Certainly Cardwell was aware of his literary work, but had also come to know him because of his work for the National Aid Society during the Franco-Prussian War.
- ⁶³ Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, is an interesting character. He took his military profession seriously and developed a reputation as a serious soldier and good administrator. His career was slightly hindered by his Royal connections. In Egypt in 1882 he was largely kept out of the action, despite being in command of a brigade, because of Wolseley's fear of what would happen if he came to harm, bearing in mind that the Queen already disliked him. He would arguably have made a fine Commander-in-Chief or Chief of Staff, but the politicians were fearful of another 'Royal Prince' after the problems the Duke of Cambridge had caused successive Governments.
- ⁶⁴ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.354-355.
- ⁶⁵ Macdiarmid, D.S. *The Life of Lieut. General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson* (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1923), p.63.

Henry Brackenbury and the Franco-Prussian War: **A unique perspective and account of the conflict**

Introduction

The Legion of Honour and the Iron Cross are two of the most renowned and coveted decorations in the world. To receive either is a great achievement and gives one admission to an elite group of people. However, for one individual to receive both is a very rare achievement. To the best of my knowledge there is only one man who has been awarded both. That man was Henry Brackenbury, who received the awards as recognition of his tireless work for The National Aid Society during the Franco-Prussian War. What makes this achievement even more surprising is the fact that Brackenbury was a serving officer in the British Army. Brackenbury was later to gain public recognition as a prominent member of ‘the Ashanti Ring’ and finished his career as a full General. However, these early events in his career are not widely known, and such a rare achievement deserves recognition. This chapter will look at Brackenbury's role during the conflict, and its immediate aftermath. This article does not presume to tell the story of the Franco-Prussian War or even of the National Aid Society, but it is interesting for the historian to see what light Brackenbury's role throws on a well-studied event.¹

Writing on the ‘Sick and Wounded’

To this point Brackenbury's career had been largely uneventful. He had seen active service soon after his commissioning, during the Indian Mutiny, but since then had been filling various administrative and teaching positions within the Royal Artillery. After fourteen years service he was only a captain, which considering he had been commissioned as a lieutenant illustrates that his rise had been far from dramatic. By this time his literary credentials were well established and his series of articles on

army reform that had predated and anticipated the Cardwell reforms had in particular given him a certain level of recognition.² It was Brackenbury's literary abilities that were to bring him to the attention of the people for whom he would work during the conflict. In 1867 he had visited the Paris Exhibition and had been interested in the display of ambulances and materials of the French 'Societe Internationale de Secours aux Blesses'.³ This led him to look at similar work in Prussia, Austria and Italy. He also studied the work done by similar organisations during the American Civil War. These studies convinced him that Britain needed a society to provide relief for the sick and wounded of conflicts. As a consequence, in January 1868, he published two articles in *The Standard* entitled 'Help for the Sick and Wounded'. These articles described what he had seen in Paris and the studies he had undertaken into such voluntary bodies in other countries. He concluded:

We have seen what other nations have done. What is England doing? We have our Nightingale Fund for training nurses, our Patriotic Fund for the relief of Crimean sufferers. Where is our branch of the 'International Society for the Relief of the Sick and Wounded', and what work is it doing? Where is its shipload of comforts to follow the Abyssinian expedition?...In Heavens name let us be up and doing. We have signed the Convention of Geneva. We are bound in honour to be working in time of peace not for ourselves alone, but for all the other nations, whose wounded may, by even the remotest possibility, ever fall into our hands. We invite discussion and action on a subject affecting both our soldiers lives and our national honour.⁴

The two articles brought him to the attention of like-minded people such as John Furley, Capt C.J. Burgess, and Colonel Loyd-Lindsay (later Lord Wantage). When war broke out they were to remember him.

First visit to the scene of war

In 1868 Brackenbury was appointed as Professor of Military History at The Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. As a consequence of this position he was able to obtain a government grant of ten shillings a day so he could conduct battlefield tours

of Europe in the vacations in order to obtain material for his forth coming series of lectures. For Brackenbury these tours served a dual purpose. Besides giving him material for his lectures they also gave him extra opportunity to write. His tours normally led to several articles for *The Standard*, and not only on military matters. In 1870 he was preparing for a similar tour of France, Belgium and Germany and had received official permission to travel abroad. The start of his visit was delayed by the death of his mother and by the time he was ready war between France and Prussia seemed imminent.⁵ Brackenbury's permission to go still stood, but having heard that his brother Charles and Capt Hozier had been refused he decided to act immediately. On the 16th July Brackenbury left for France with Captain Hamber.⁶ He deliberately left no forwarding address for fear of being recalled. Here we see how seriously he took the need for studying his profession. The two heavyweight armies of Europe were about to engage and Brackenbury had no intention of missing it. It appealed to him on many levels. As an historian he longed to be there at the making of history and as a military writer he was intrigued. In early July he had written an article in *The Standard* on 'The Armies of France, Prussia and Spain'.⁷ Now he had the chance to see two of these armies at close quarters and in campaign conditions. As a man who had already shown that he had an interest in and flair for administrative work he was no doubt intrigued to see how the armies would cope in the field, and as a tactician the situation was full of interest. For here the mighty Prussian General Staff would go up against the highly rated French Generals such as Bazaine, MacMahon and Canrobert all of whom had seen distinguished service in the Crimea.

So all in all it was too good an opportunity to pass up, despite being fully aware of the possible repercussions his actions could have on his career if the military authorities or the government felt he had acted inappropriately. Although technically he had

permission, his hurried departure and lack of forwarding address could have left him open to disciplinary action when he returned. When he did return to England a fortnight later he found that the Government had published a ban on all officers of the armed forces from serving with either army or acting as newspaper correspondents.



Map of the general theatre of war and movement of the combatant armies.

On the 18th July Brackenbury decided to risk visiting the frontlines, despite having been warned by many in Paris that foreigners, and in particular journalists would be most unwelcome. He set off with Captain Nolan, a fellow officer in the Royal Artillery, who was acting as correspondent for *The Daily News*.⁸ Before going they had obtained special passports from the British Ambassador in Paris, Lord Lyons, a precaution that was to prove valuable later. Even on the train they were looked on with suspicion by soldiers and civilians alike. Brackenbury makes an interesting observation regarding the mood of the French. “Neither amongst the soldiers nor the civilians who were our companions on that night’s train journey was there any sign of enthusiasm. They looked on the war as something that had to be faced, but their

hearts were not in it”.⁹

Brackenbury and Capt Nolan arrived at Strasbourg in the early hours of the 19th. They obtained good rooms at a local inn, and walked around the town. Later they walked down to the bridge which crosses the Rhine. The first absurd sights of war were seen. “On the opposite side of the bank the German (Baden) sentries paced up and down within 250 yards or so of the French sentries on our bank”.¹⁰ No one fired a shot. It was one of those strange instances of war where the opposing factions were in view of each other but no action was taken.

On the 20th Brackenbury and Nolan visited Polygone where a division was encamped. With little obstruction they were able to walk freely around the camp, visit artillery batteries and inspect the stores of war, along with the cooking and sleeping arrangements.¹¹ The freedom with which two civilians were able to walk around an army division at war seems surprising to our more security-conscious times, but in many ways it was still a legacy of the way in which civilians had readily visited armies at war for years. However in only a few days time Brackenbury and Nolan were to suffer the suspicion of all foreigners that quickly grew as the conflict developed.

On the 22nd Brackenbury and his companion followed the division as it broke camp and left in the manner of a full military parade with the band playing at full volume. By process of elimination Brackenbury had worked out they must be headed for Haguenau.¹² The two men took the train and arrived before the French troops, and booked in at the local inn. After breakfast Brackenbury was asked to leave his room, as it was required by the French General's staff. During that day the two Englishmen

found themselves being watched by the police agent for the division. At first he asked Brackenbury and Nolan to share a glass of wine with him but it soon became apparent that they were suspected of being spies. The suspicion was increased by the actions of Captain Nolan when speaking to the police agent. As Brackenbury later explained:

Unfortunately, my companion, seeing the Order of Maximilian on his breast, commenced to speak Spanish to him; and nothing is so likely to gain one the credit or discredit of being a spy as the power of speaking three or four languages.¹³

Fortunately the documents which Lord Lyons had provided them with were sufficient to protect them. As Brackenbury himself later wrote, “Our suspicious friends were overawed. They dared not go further. They still suspected us, but they dare not arrest us”.¹⁴ The French officers still tried to pump both men for information. A guard was placed outside their rooms overnight, and their papers retained. Yet in the morning they were told they were free to go, and were even invited to stay on with the division if they wished, but they decided to try and get to Metz. This incident reminds us of the very real danger that Brackenbury was placing himself in.

When they arrived at Metz the danger they had been in was brought home to them. Two British officers and two special correspondents had been arrested as spies and badly treated, although they were later released. With the whole town in the grip of, as Brackenbury called it, ‘Spy Mania’, he decided that he would move on to the comparative calm of independent Luxembourg.

With his leave almost over Brackenbury started his return journey via Spa and Brussels, and reached London by August 1st. With this his first contact with the Franco-Prussian War came to an end and he returned to his teaching duties at Woolwich. The impact of his seven long letters to *The Standard* that he had written

whilst in France led to an offer from the editor to write a 'Diary of the War'. This was to be a daily article, written every evening, so as to take full advantage of the latest telegraphs from the front. As Brackenbury later wrote:

The idea was that I should write every evening a summary of the days war news, up to the latest hour, explaining its probable bearing on the future of the operations, with such comments as would make the Diary at once intelligible to the general reader and useful to the military student.¹⁵

On the 27th August Brackenbury made something of a coup when he became the first correspondent to work out the reasoning behind Marshall MacMahon's strange manoeuvring.¹⁶ The series of articles came to an end when Brackenbury left to return to the scene of battle.

The National Aid Society

Mention was made earlier of Brackenbury's articles on the need to set up a British organisation to provide help to the sick and wounded of war which appeared in *The Standard* in January 1868. It was this work which brought Brackenbury to the attention of John Furley and Captain C.J.Burgess, later to play an important part in the National Aid Society. After his initial visit to France, he was invited to join a committee that was set to create a society to help the sick and wounded on both sides of the conflict. On 4th August 1870 the National Aid Society was founded and Brackenbury was elected to the executive committee. Brackenbury's close friend Colonel Robert Loyd-Lindsay (later Lord Wantage) was elected chairman, and the Prince of Wales accepted the presidency. The executive committee also included the Earl of Shaftsbury, Lord Overstone, Baron N de Rothschild, Viscount Bury, Sir Harry Verney, Captain Douglas Dalton and Mr John Furley. Several leading surgeons acted as advisors. The day the society was formed was also the day that the first action of the war was fought at Wissembourg. That very evening John Furley and Captain

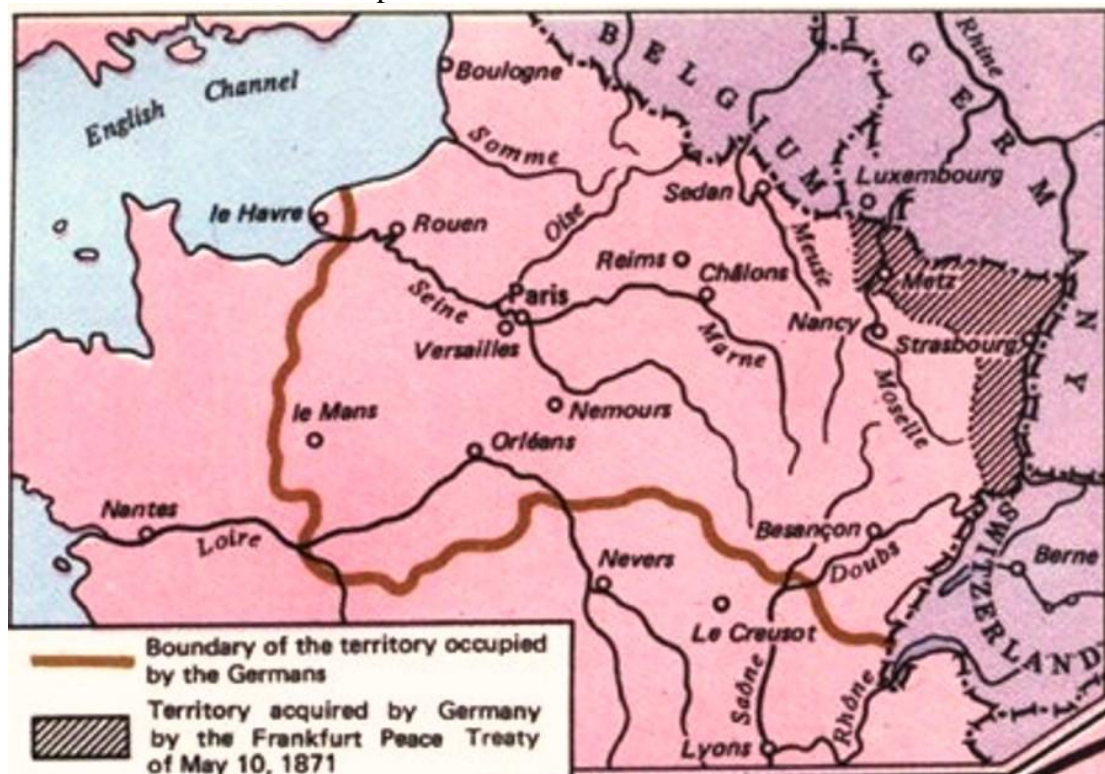
Burgess set out for the continent to see what was needed and what the Society could do. Money was being donated at a surprising rate. Colonel Loyd-Lindsay had written in *The Times* about the need for the society and had stated that he had placed a thousand pounds in the bank for its use, and he encouraged others of a like mind and bank balance, to do the same. As Lady Wantage, his wife, later wrote,

After Loyd-Lindsay's letter the Red Cross Committee made no further appeals for funds: these were given spontaneously, and an overwhelming stream, both of money and material, poured in from every part of England.¹⁷

Within three weeks of the society's formation it had forty surgeons working on the continent and by the end of September sixty-two surgeons and sixteen nurses were working for the society near or at the front. All this had been achieved with an ad hoc system, with no previous experience of such an undertaking, for nothing like this had ever been tried in this country, and all under the wartime problems of communication and movement. One of the biggest problems was trying to guess where the next engagement would be and trying to prepare for it. This, added to the growing scope of the war, was the reason that it was decided to appoint a military agent of the society who could conduct business at the front on its behalf. When Brackenbury arrived for a committee meeting of the National Aid Society on 2nd September 1870, he was taken to one side by Colonel Loyd-Lindsay and asked if he would go to the front as the military agent of the society and organise its work. Brackenbury's immediate reaction was to point out the two main drawbacks to his appointment. First there was his work for *The Standard* and secondly, his professorship at Woolwich.

Brackenbury was willing to give up his journalism, but was not willing to give up his professorship. He felt that it was unlikely that, having just come back from the summer vacation, he would be allowed the extended leave that such an appointment would require. However, as we have already seen, The National Aid Society had

friends in high places. Loyd-Lindsay tried appealing to the Governor of the Academy at Woolwich, General Sir Lintorn Simmons, but to no avail. He then appealed directly to Cardwell, the Secretary of State for War, and it was he who ordered that a month's leave be given to Brackenbury so that he could take up the appointment. The influence of the prominent members of the committee is perhaps only half the reason behind the Secretary of State's decision. If the National Aid Society work was to be successful it had become obvious that someone was needed to handle the administration and organisation of the efforts on the continent and The National Aid Society wanted Brackenbury. If he were able to achieve the improvement that was wanted it would do no harm to British prestige and might do much to gain the respect and thanks of the combatant powers.



Map showing the main area of the conflict.

His initial month's leave was paid but by the time the month was up Brackenbury's work was in full flow. Colonel Loyd-Lindsay appealed to the Cardwell for an

extension to Brackenbury's leave, stressing that to remove him now would be to the detriment of the Society and to the wounded of the conflict. Again he was successful, and Brackenbury's leave was extended to the end of the year. The only condition was that he was to receive no pay during this period. This brings up an interesting point about Brackenbury's service. Although he lost no seniority, which of course was made up by length of service, he lost all his pay both as Professor of History at Woolwich and as a Captain in the Royal Artillery. To many this may not have been much of a sacrifice as with few, if any, officers were able to meet all their expenses their pay. Yet Brackenbury had also given up his only other source of income, his journalism, and to this end he really was making a sacrifice. Perhaps he saw an opportunity in this service that was far beyond monetary value. He would of course be right at the front of a conflict between the two most powerful armies in the world, which would appeal to him as a soldier, a tactician and a historian. He would also be presented with an opportunity of unique experiences. He would be one of only a handful of British officers who saw the conflict as it happened which gave him a view that perhaps only one other British officer saw, namely Herbert (later Lord) Kitchener.¹⁸ Unlike official observers, who were stationed largely at headquarters, both men got to see the conflict on the front lines. That is why he was able to write to Loyd-Lindsay on the 9th September, that, "It must have been an awful fight here. 129 Bavarian Officers and 2000 men killed in and about Balan. Street-fighting in its worst form, and what is worse than street-fighting?". His vivid account continued:

There they lay side by side together, French and Germans, enemies no longer, all quiet in there common suffering. Floors covered with the poor fellows, with every sort of wound. Some dying with balls through the chest, some with crushed arms or legs from shells. One Frenchman had lain for three days in a ditch, and was brought in to have his thigh amputated. He asked for a cigar the moment the amputation was over. Another Bavarian with his thigh smashed to pieces by a shell; and, alas! In such a condition that I could not go

near him, though his wounds are dressed with pure carbolic acid. The wounds are now in their stage of suppuration, and a cigar was necessary for men who, like myself, are not accustomed to such places.¹⁹

It was perhaps a benefit that the inexperienced subaltern got his first view of such horrendous sights when there were no troops relying on him. It obviously helped to prepare him for the sights he would see in his later active service career.²⁰

Brackenbury set out for the continent on the 3rd September 1870, accompanied by the Honourable Reginald Capel, another agent for the National Aid Society, and a courier. Their first stop was Brussels where Brackenbury obtained papers from the Belgian Foreign Minister allowing him travel to the frontier, and asking the local authorities to give him every assistance possible. His first task was to find a suitable place for a depot from which the Society's resources could be allocated to hospitals near the front lines. The committee back home had been debating two locations, namely Luxembourg and Arlon. A quick visit to Luxembourg showed him that the scarcity of transport in the area made it quite impractical for that purpose. The situation was not much better at Arlon but he received every help possible from the authorities there who gave him the ground floor of the Palais de Justice to use as a warehouse. His early days were full of problems, mainly to do with lack of stores, but by 9th September he was able to telegraph Lloyd-Lindsay, to the effect that the Society was now fully at work at Arlon, supplying all the hospitals around Sedan.

In his writings from that period, Brackenbury makes some interesting points about the usefulness of the work the Society did, above the worthy aim of reducing the suffering of the sick and wounded. Whilst recognising the good work of Furley and others, he now felt that the Society's work had to be raised to another level. Almost as soon as he arrived Brackenbury wrote that:

It only wants that the individual efforts going on should be completely organised (for which my powers are sufficient) to let it be seen what gigantic efforts England is making to relieve the misery which by all accounts is almost unspeakable.²¹

Brackenbury was obviously keen that the world should see what the Society was doing, not necessarily for any personal glory for himself or the members of the Society but so that Britain could show her humanitarian side to the world.²² On 27th October he wrote to Loyd-Lindsay:

I cannot tell you with what pleasure I look on our work here; the first to enter Metz, the first to give succour, the first also in liberality, our Society has taken the place which England's generosity entitles us to assume. No one can know the misery we relieve; no one can ever estimate the blessings that are showed upon us for our work.²³

Whilst this might sound rather grand and patriotic, perhaps even slightly jingoistic, it must be remembered that Brackenbury was the first to give credit to the surgeons and agents who were at the sharp end of the Society's work. More than that, it is obvious that Brackenbury is excited about what he is doing. In many ways it was an ideal situation for his type of soldier. He was engaged in demanding administrative and organisational work whilst at the same time getting a real sense of wartime and active service conditions. To an extent he lived on the frontlines with the soldiers, and whilst he never deliberately courted danger, he was on several occasions shot at because of this proximity.

The really interesting part in what he writes is about 'England's generosity'.

Brackenbury continually makes the argument that Britain's position and reputation in Europe, especially amongst France and Germany, is being enhanced by the work of the Society. A week after the battle of Sedan, Brackenbury wrote to Loyd-Lindsay singling out the work of Dr Frank and Mr Blewitt at the hospital at Balan. Part of this letter illustrates some of his motives. "If England can ever gain kind thoughts from

France and Prussia, it is by the work of such men as these".²⁴ Perhaps here is evidence of his desire to show Britain's impartial humanitarianism. Brackenbury tried desperately to avoid the Society becoming anything other than impartial. He found this a problem when asked by the French Societe de Secours to distribute stores on their behalf. Whilst the French Aid agencies were in complete chaos, the German medical and charitable arrangements were well organised. John F Hutchinson, in his book about the Red Cross, points out that this had a great deal to do with the fact that the German organisation had been tested in war quite recently, in Denmark and Austria, and that this had led to many significant changes to the organisation.²⁵ A year before the war Prince Pless had been appointed as Royal Commissioner and Inspector General of charitable assistance to the military in time of war. During the conflict he took strict control of the work of the German aid societies, who enjoyed no autonomy at all. At one stage the Prussians wanted to take control of the distribution of the Society's store, as they had done with the stores of the Berlin Society. Brackenbury resisted strongly, and successfully. He pointed out that there had been cases of stores being given to troops who were neither sick nor wounded, and that if the stores under Brackenbury were used in this way he would be guilty of a breach of neutrality and open to the criticism of the British Government. This was no exaggeration, as the case of Herbert Kitchener demonstrated. Kitchener served in a French Ambulance unit during the war, and later received a severe reprimand from the Commander-in-Chief, who told him that as a serving British Army officer he could have jeopardised British neutrality by his actions. After much debate Brackenbury won the argument. "I at last prevailed, and obtained that independence of action which I insisted on as an indispensable condition of further assistance".²⁶

This is new evidence that the work of the Society was being recognised by both the

French and German authorities. It was also recognised by the French Journalist M Thieblin, who wrote to Brackenbury, "I have seldom seen so honest Englishmen. There is nothing but work, hard work, and not a single boast, not even a shade of vanity so natural in men performing so splendid a work".²⁷ Brackenbury was also invited to dine with the Crown Prince of Prussia (later Kaiser Friedrich III). During the dinner on December 2nd, Brackenbury sat on the Crown Prince's left, facing General Von Blumenthal, his chief-of-staff. Brackenbury's account of the dinner gives an interesting portrayal of the two men. Blumenthal continually read out the despatches from the front as they were delivered to impress the guests as to the success the Prussians were having, but Brackenbury was not fooled. He concluded that, "... the despatches which I heard, though generally favourable, did not record any marked success".²⁸ It is quite clear from Brackenbury's writings that he saw this as an obvious attempt to impress their British visitor. This is interesting when compared with Brackenbury's record of his conversation with the Crown Prince. Prince Friedrich told Brackenbury of his admiration for what the Society was doing and of his hatred of war and assured him that the German states had not set out with the intention to annex parts of France, though he now conceded that such an outcome was inevitable because of national feeling. Brackenbury later wrote that:

I left profoundly impressed with the character of this Soldier-Prince, who, fresh from the battles on the frontier and with some of his troops engaged in a hard struggle at that very moment, was not ashamed to avow, in the presence of his whole staff of war-worn soldiers, his hatred of war.²⁹

Within only a month of Brackenbury's arrival the system of distribution was running smoothly. He had visited every hospital in the Sedan area to ascertain their needs and had now been able to meet them. The Society had taken control of a 100-bed hospital at Saarbruck, a 60-bed hospital at Briery, where they had also set up an advanced

depot to supply all the hospitals in the area around Sedan. Arlon was still the main depot, supplying the whole area. Depots were also being opened in Saarbruk and Remily. The whole system was maintained by hired wagons, which transported the stores between depots and to the hospitals themselves.

When all this had been organised Brackenbury set off for London for a few days to make a report to the Society and to consult the committee on its future operations.

The main question that he had in mind was how to move in to Metz as quickly as possible when the fortress fell. On 4th October he returned to the continent, and spent the next three weeks in Brussels. He found information on the conduct of the war far easier to come by there, but he was still close enough to the depots at Arlon and Saarbruck if he was needed. Brackenbury records that he had more than one audience with the King of the Belgians, who did much to help the Society's efforts.³⁰ His relationship with the French community in Brussels, including both refugees and the French Minister Monsieur Tachard, also helped keep him informed about the situation at Metz. He tried through them to establish when the fortress was most likely to fall and what the most pressing needs of the inhabitants would be. As a result of this he was able to have such stores as were thought necessary distributed amongst the depots at Arlon Saarbruck, Briey and Remilly. Whilst much of this sounds quite basic, it is important to point out that because of this planning and forethought the Society was the first to supply materials to the sick and wounded of Metz, even before the French or the Germans.

Fall of Metz

On 27th October the French fortress of Metz fell. Brackenbury heard of its demise by late afternoon. He immediately telegraphed this information to the depots, but

deciding it was too late in the day to start, delayed his departure till the next day.

Early on 28th he went to the bank and withdrew as much gold as he was able to take out. He was accompanied by the wife of Marshal Canrobert, who was journeying to be with her husband before he was to leave for captivity in Germany. On the way Brackenbury saw many French prisoners, later recounting, "It was a pitiful sight. There were 22,000 men still in the corps, and it had lost 10,800 in the two days about Renzonville and Gravelotte. Half starved, worn and weary, they came out to lie down in the same mud where for so many weary nights the Prussian outposts had lain".³¹ Late on the 29th they arrived in Metz, where rooms for the night were scarce.

Brackenbury and Madame Canrobert were fortunate to be shown kindness by Captain von Foerster, General von Kummer's aide-de-camp, who was able to get them permission to spend the night in the mansion house that had been the French divisional headquarters before the surrender. It now stood completely empty, and as Brackenbury later wrote, "in all Metz that night there was nobody so well lodged as ourselves".³²

Meanwhile stores from the Society poured in to Metz from the depots at Arlon, Remilly and Saarbruck. Mr Bushman, another member of the National Aid Society, had arrived with the stores from Saarbruck and was met by Prince Pless who offered him a building for a depot. The next day Brackenbury accompanied Mr Bushman to meet with Prince Pless. This was the first of several meetings between the two men, many of which dealt with the future distribution of materials around the Paris area. As a result it was decided that the Society would establish a depot at Chateau Thierry, later moved to Meaux, so as to meet the future demand around Paris. It was not just in Metz itself that the Society helped the relief of the troops engaged in that zone of the conflict. At Forbach, on the railway line between Metz and Saarbruck, a 'restaurant'

was established that helped not only the German sick and wounded but, as it was on the line back to Germany, many French Prisoners on their way to captivity. Along with supplying food, coffee and wine, it also gave out warm clothing. Brackenbury estimated that this 'restaurant' helped 19,500 men. The care of prisoners was something that was very much in Brackenbury's mind. He wrote several times about the 'pitiful' sights of these men. He even visited Mainz to see the treatment of the prisoners in the large camp that had been set up there. "I was convinced that the Germans were doing all they could for them, but their conditions left much to be desired, as there was a great want of warm clothing".³³ Brackenbury even persuaded the Society to place £1000 at the disposal of Madame Canrobert to be used to help the French prisoners.

He decided to make Metz his headquarters for the foreseeable future and rented a house to use as an office. This was a considerable risk to his own person as typhus and smallpox were rife in the town, but again illustrates his devotion to the work. He stayed in Metz because it was the best place for him to do the work. In fact he continually took risks while in the service of the Society. Whilst in France he always wore his military uniform as a Captain in the Royal Artillery, and although he always wore the armlet of the National Aid Society, which carried the Red Cross and was signed by the French and German authorities, this was no guarantee that he would not come under fire. Whilst with the Germans around Thionville Brackenbury had his hat shot off his head by a French marksman. Obviously the marksman had no way of seeing the armlet, but even if he had been able to there was no guarantee that it would have made any difference. As John F Hutchinson points out, "No attempt had been made to familiarise French soldiers with the terms of the Geneva Convention or with

the meaning of the Red Cross flag and armband”. The situation was hindered further by the fact that French medical staff, on the whole, refused to wear such armlets. “French army surgeons were evidently still wedded to the idea that they were combatants first and physicians second and believed that wearing the badge of neutrality would be seen as a confession of weakness or cowardice”.³⁴ This made the work of Brackenbury and other Society representatives near the front even more hazardous.

Returning from the front

At the end of January 1871 Brackenbury returned to England to resume his teaching duties at Woolwich. His last report for the Society, written in February 1871, makes for interesting reading. “Our aid, given most impartially to the French and Germans, has saved lives and relieved suffering to an extent difficult to realise”. He goes on to record the thanks that both French and Germans had given to the society and praises the people who worked for it.

In spite of this strange mixture of classes and professions, so well has the staff been selected, that among all those sent out by your committee – amounting to considerably more than 100 in my district – there has not been one case of dishonesty, and scarcely one failure of any kind. And I must not omit here to speak of the noble self-sacrificing exertions of the medical staff of our various hospitals, and the English ladies who have acted as nurses.³⁵

He stated that everyone, even down to the drivers of the wagons, had done well. “It is not to be wondered at that, as Captain Nevill writes, the people who see the work can only slowly believe that it is done without some deep ulterior motive”. Throughout the war there were comments and accusations that the Society had been acting in breach of its neutrality. Brackenbury answered these critics in unequivocal fashion.

I have been very much grieved to see persistent statements that we have done more for the Germans than the French, and that we have only been relieving the Germans from doing for their own and the French wounded what otherwise they must have done. Both these statements are very wrong, and the

last argues entire ignorance of the terrible strain under which Germany is carrying out this war. Germany is making enormous efforts on behalf of the sick and wounded but do all she can, she cannot meet the wants.

He later went on to say that,

In regard to our aid not being given equally to the French, I have often been accused abroad of doing more for them than the Germans. I have honestly striven to keep the balance even, but the spectacle of destitution and humiliation, mental and bodily suffering which the invaded districts of France afford, compel the sympathies of most men rather towards weak France than towards strong Germany, proud in her consciousness of power.³⁶

After his submission of this report he received a semi-official letter from Loyd-Lindsay thanking him for his efforts, both personally and on behalf of the committee, noting that he had served with the utmost “.... zeal and self-devotion, combined with great practical ability....”.³⁷ Loyd-Lindsay’s thanks were the first of many Brackenbury would receive for this work. The French Government issued a decree on 25th January 1871 making Brackenbury an officer of the Legion of Honour, although Brackenbury did not receive the decree officially until 4th March, as protocol demanded that it be sent to him via the War Office. In February the King of Bavaria conferred upon him the Order of St Michael (1st Class), along with a letter praising his work, and in early March, Brackenbury heard through the British Minister in Berlin that the Crown Prince wanted to award him the Iron Cross.³⁸ There was, however, a snag. The award would only be made if Brackenbury was given official leave to wear it. There were two main problems with this. Firstly Queen Victoria was renowned for her antipathy towards ‘her’ officers wearing foreign decorations, and secondly the government took the view that as he had not been involved in this work on behalf of Her Majesty’s Government they could not give permission for him to wear it. Brackenbury, now to his horror, found that a similar decision applied to his French and Bavarian awards. Mr Eastwick, M.P asked parliament to approve that an exception to be made for those who had served for the Red Cross, and this was

original passed. However, Gladstone objected to it and on calling for another vote the motion was defeated, with five of the Liberal M.Ps who had originally voted in favour being persuaded to change their minds. Gladstone did give an undertaking that the Foreign Secretary would look into the matter but nothing was ever done.

Fortunately for Brackenbury the awards were still sent to him one by one. The Bavarians had sent their award to him long before the matter had been raised in Parliament. Not long after the debate the German and French awards arrived. Later on he received the cross of the French Societe de Secours and the cross of Order of St John.

Conclusion

The work he had done, added to his reputation as a writer, had turned him into something of a minor celebrity. Long after he was still being remembered for it. The Empress Eugenie, now exiled and living in Chiselhurst, asked to see him, and Brackenbury duly visited. Once the Emperor Napoleon III had returned from imprisonment in Germany, Brackenbury was invited again and spoke at length with him about his work for the Society. He also remained life long-friends with Marshal Canrobert and his wife, who he escorted to Versailles during the commune when the Marshal had been brought back to deal with the situation in Paris. Although not of interest to the topic under discussion it has to be added that Brackenbury was on one of his vacation tours during the height of the Commune, and saw much of what went on.³⁹

Later on in 1871 Brackenbury started work on a book, in French, on the conduct of the war from the French perspective. In it he was highly critical of the actions of Marshal Bazaine, who had kept signals from the Emperor and Marshal MacMahon to

himself and refused to march to their assistance. Brackenbury clearly felt this had been done because of Bazaine's reluctance to serve under the Emperor's command, but that it might also have been because he foresaw the disaster at Sedan and knew he would be left with France's only army. The book was in print and was about to be published when Brackenbury heard that Bazaine was to be tried for his actions.

Brackenbury immediately did all he could to stop its publication for fear of prejudicing the trial. The French publisher refused unless Brackenbury paid him the whole amount that he expected as a return for the sales. Brackenbury paid this out of his own pocket and all but a few copies, which were sent to him, were destroyed. The remaining copies were, after the trial, distributed to friends. Sir Lintorn Simmons, Marshal Canrobert, the Staff College library and Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia, all received copies. Given that he would have written the book partly as a money making exercise, for Brackenbury to pay to have the book suppressed was quite a sacrifice given his financial limitations.

Brackenbury's small part in the Franco-Prussian War has been largely forgotten but it is of some significance in terms of both his life and his growing reputation. The National Aid Society was a new and quite radical idea, which laid the foundation of charitable assistance in war in this country. Indeed in due course the society would become the British Red Cross. Brackenbury did actually support Sir John Furley's view that the society should maintain its organisation in peacetime and train up its units so that they were prepared for the next conflict. It was also suggested that they should be able to assist at natural disasters in Britain. However Loyd-Lindsay, as chairman, would not allow this, feeling that the society had been established to meet the need of war and that in peacetime it had no role, and as there was no desire to lose

him from that position, nothing was done about it. The work that Brackenbury and the other members of the Society did during the war undoubtedly did much to alleviate the suffering of many. The way in which Brackenbury was honoured for his work by the combatant powers illustrates the value they placed on his achievements. The work the Society did was without thought of financial gain, and at some personal risk to themselves. Brackenbury risked not only his life, but also his financial security and his career in the army. He had lost his two sources of income, although only temporarily in the case of his army pay, and his leave of absence had not been very well received at the War Office or the Horse Guards. Yet the Franco-Prussian War was an experience that served Brackenbury well. It allowed his administrative prowess to come to the fore and gave him some sense of a large-scale conflict which could be applied in the varied field experiences of future years.

Notes

¹ The main reason for this chapter is to further the Brackenbury story by illustrating an important period in his career advancement. As a result the main source for this chapter is Brackenbury's own account of events in *Some Memories of My Spare Time*. A slight drawback is that this was written some forty years after the events took place. However Brackenbury does quote his own correspondence from the time frequently. Unfortunately many of the sources, except his press articles, have been lost/destroyed.

² It is worth noting that after the war Brackenbury wrote an account, in French, of the conflict. He had it pulled from publication for fear of prejudicing the trials that were taking place against French generals in the aftermath of defeat.

³ Brackenbury formed a somewhat unfairly favourable view of the French Society. Bertrand Taithe has described it as little more than "a rather informal club of medical men who had personally experienced war, and benevolent aristocrats like Viscount de Melun". The society had no funds and all its views on what could be done were purely theoretical, as nothing had been planned at all. Taithe has also said that as a result it had no purpose. However in fairness it must be added that Britain did not even have this. Taithe, Bertrand, 'The Red Cross Flag in the Franco-Prussian War: Civilians, Humanitarians and War in the 'Modern Age'' in Coote, Roger (editor) *War, Medicine and Modernity* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), pp.29-32.

⁴ Brackenbury, Henry 'Help for the Sick and Wounded' *The Standard*, (21st January 1868).

⁵ No detail is given about either the causes or course of the Franco-Prussian War. The most authoritative account of the conflict remains Michael Howard's *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France 1870-1871* (London: Hart Davis, 1961), and republished many times. More recent works of note are Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France 1870-1871* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003) & Stephen Badsey, *The Franco-Prussian War 1870-1871* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003).

⁶ Captain Thomas Hamber was the editor of *The Standard*. Why Hamber had decided to accompany him of this battlefield tour is unclear. It may have been the hope of seeing the forthcoming conflict, but could just have easily been an interest, as a former soldier, in the battlefields of former campaigns. Hamber had served in the Crimean War as a captain in the French Foreign Legion. Hamber left

Brackenbury in Paris to return to London. Brackenbury seems to suggest that this was not according to their initial plan.

⁷ Brackenbury, Henry 'The Armies of France, Prussia, and Spain' *The Standard*, (12th July 1870).

⁸ Nolan was later, as Colonel Nolan, well known as the M.P for Galway and chief whip of the Irish Party in the House of Commons.

⁹ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909), p.90.

¹⁰ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.91.

¹¹ According to Brackenbury he was only once challenged by a sentry and that even then it was "a feeble protest".

¹² The fact that he had guessed where they were going led to suspicion amongst the French officers they later came into contact with. Brackenbury explained that he had worked on simple logic

¹³ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.94-95.

¹⁴ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of my Spare Time*, p.97.

¹⁵ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.104. 'The Diary of the War' was published in *The Standard* everyday between 6th August and 1st September 1870.

¹⁶ In short Marshal MacMahon was trying to manoeuvre around the right flank of the Prussians in order to join up with the army of Marshal Bazaine at Metz, but it was being done in such a way as to hopefully avoid the Prussians realising this.

¹⁷ Although a history of the British Red Cross is not necessary in this context it is worth making the point clear. The National Aid Society which was formed in 1870 continued to be so named until 1905 when it formally became the British Red Cross Society.

¹⁸ Kitchener found himself unofficially serving with the French Army, for which he received a severe reprimand on his return. Both he and Brackenbury got far closer to the action, and saw more vividly what was happening than any of the official military observers did.

¹⁹ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.125-126.

²⁰ What he saw might have influenced him as a commander. Many of the casualties he witnessed in the Franco-Prussian war were the result of ill-discipline and poor training. When Brackenbury later commanded the River Column in the Sudan he was criticised for his harsh discipline and meticulous attention to detail. Both traits may have had much to do with what he saw in the Franco-Prussian War.

²¹ The original of the letter no longer exists, but it is reproduced in, Wantage, Baroness *Lord Wantage, V.C: A Memoir* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1907), pp.180-181.

²² This was becoming increasingly important in what Bertrand Taithe has called 'the dawn of international humanitarianism'.

²³ Wantage, Baroness, *Lord Wantage, V.C: A Memoir*, p.182.

²⁴ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.125.

²⁵ Hutchinson, John. F, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), pp.117-122. This is a sub-chapter entitled '1870: German Efficiency'.

²⁶ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.136.

²⁷ This part of the letter is reproduced in, Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.130.

²⁸ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.159-160.

²⁹ Prince Frederick has been recognised as being rather liberal in his views, this being attributed largely to the influence of his wife Princess Victoria, daughter of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. This is still quite remarkable language for a 'soldier-Prince' to use.

³⁰ The King granted them freedom to cross the borders with impunity. This was especially useful as the Belgian boarders guards were at a heightened level of security during the conflict

³¹ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.142.

³² Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.144.

³³ Brackenbury, Henry, *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.162.

³⁴ Hutchinson, John. F, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross*, pp.115-116.

³⁵ The report is reproduced in Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.165-166.

³⁶ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.166-167.

³⁷ The letter is reproduced in Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.169.

³⁸ The correspondence that Brackenbury had with the British Minister in Berlin, Odo William Leopold Russell, on this matter can be found in WO33/50 (also marked FO918/68) at the National Archives, Kew.

³⁹ The insurrection in Paris started on 18th March 1871. Brackenbury arrived on 4th April and through his connection with the French military was able to get written permission to go where he pleased

along the French lines. By this time the Communists offensive had been stopped and they were now acting purely on the defensive. A lot of the fighting revolved around artillery, which was of obvious interest to Brackenbury, and he spent much time at the various French artillery batteries. It appears that Brackenbury's escorting of Marshal Canrobert was at the request of the Commandant of the army of Paris General Vinoy.

Service in the Field

Introduction

Brackenbury's active service and his various appointments up to 1886 are of great importance for several reasons. It showed that he was far more than just a good administrator. It also demonstrates the scope and depth of Brackenbury's campaigning career, which added to his various administrative roles, gave him a unique level of experience in the Army. His active service also brought him under the influence of Sir Garnet Wolseley, who would play a significant part in Brackenbury's advancement and career. It also showed that he was not only a thinking soldier but that he had experience in the field and knew how to fight. This chapter will look at the various experiences Brackenbury had during the period from 1873 to 1886. During this time he served in a variety of campaigns. Whilst not intending to be a history of any of the particular campaigns it will, however, be necessary to make brief mentions of the conduct of the campaigns. Although this period was dominated by service in the field, other appointments have been included to provide a general picture of the service life of Henry Brackenbury from his return from the Franco-Prussian War to his appointment as Head of the Intelligence Department at the War Office. The aim is to highlight Brackenbury's active service experience and to assess what role this played on his outlook and thinking.

The founding of the 'Ashanti Ring'

The Ashanti Campaign of 1873-1874 was one in a long line of punitive expeditions which were undertaken by the British Army, usually assisted by native and local forces, during the Victorian era. What made the Ashanti campaign different was the level of planning and skill that went into organising it. This campaign also saw the foundation of a group of officers, many of whom were considered the brightest and

best that the British Army had to offer, around the personage of Garnet Wolseley. Thereafter they followed him from campaign to campaign. These men were called the 'Ashanti Ring', the 'Wolseley Ring' and the 'Wolseley Gang', the latter normally being reserved for use by those who were jealous and envious of them.¹

The Ashanti were a warrior tribe on Africa's Gold Coast. Europeans had garrisoned the once precious coastline since the 1600s.² The British trading posts had long lost their importance by the time the British Africa Company went bankrupt in 1821 and the British government took over its assets. Where the company had been happy to bribe the Ashanti to stay away from their trading posts and to leave the Fanti tribes alone, the British government refused to take such action. The first Crown Governor, Sir Charles Macarthy, refused to pay tribute to the Ashanti and along with the white settlers and the Fanti went out to meet the subsequent Ashanti invasion. The settlers' guns should have proved decisive but unfortunately the Fanti, not for the first or the last time, deserted during the battle and Sir Charles and his supporters were defeated. The Ashanti cut off his head and turned his skull into the Royal drinking cup. The British response was to see it as an act of barbarism, although to the Ashanti it was perceived as a compliment for the way in which Sir Charles had fought so bravely. However the British action does seem to have deterred the Ashanti somewhat as it was not until 1873 that they launched the next serious attack. This time it was repelled by a detachment of Royal Marines from H.M.S Barracuda. This occurred in January, and by June the Marines were still there and had suffered no problems. Then the rainy season began in earnest and by July the garrison had been decimated by dysentery and smallpox. Ten marines died and a further fifty-eight had to be sent home for hospital treatment.³ The problems that the marines suffered were no more than was

expected. The Gold Coast was renowned as a 'white mans graveyard'. The story is told, perhaps apocryphally, that an officer posted to the Gold Coast asked an officer who had seen previous service there what kit he should take with him. The answer he received was, "Take a coffin that's all you will need".⁴ Whilst the British Government recognised the need for action against the Ashanti, largely to restore British pride, they were reluctant to commit 'white' troops' because of the obvious health risks. Garnet Wolseley was given command of the expedition and was charged with bringing the campaign to a successful conclusion with the use of West African Hausas and the West Indian Regiment. It was felt that they would be better able to stand up to the conditions, and it must be said that they were also considered expendable in a way that even the much-abused British soldier was not.

The evidence suggests that there was in fact tacit agreement between the Secretary of State for War, Charles Cardwell and the Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberley, that British regulars would be needed to bring the campaign to a successful and decisive conclusion.⁵ It was also suggested that if handled properly the Government would agree to such an action. This was partly why Wolseley was selected, despite being officially only a colonel. His conduct when commander of the Red River expedition in Canada had demonstrated both his organisational skills and his attention to detail. Just as important was the fact that he had been able to achieve success in Canada quickly and cheaply, both in terms of casualties and money. The aim of this campaign was simply to restore British pride and hopefully demonstrate British military superiority to such an extent that there would be no more Ashanti raids into British territory. It was made clear to Wolseley by the Government that this had to be done quickly and cheaply and with a small loss of life, at least for the British. This was why he was determined to use what he thought of as the brightest and best of the British

officer corps to help him achieve this end. He was criticised for what some saw as an unnecessary use of officers of such calibre, and was accused of, “using the finest steel in our Army to cut brushwood”.⁶ Yet this was to ignore the fact that such calibre of men were needed if the campaign were to be handled in the way the Government wanted. He needed men who were intelligent, good administrators and who understood fully the constraints under which he was expected to operate. This is not to say that they were not good ‘fighting’ men. Two had already won the Victoria Cross, and another two would before their careers were out. It was not usual for a commander of an expedition to be given such a free hand in selecting his officers. It was to be a constant complaint levelled against him, mostly by the Duke of Cambridge, that he picked the same officers each time and objected to those who were ‘forced’ on him by the War Office. The fact that he was allowed such a free hand illustrates not only the confidence but also the close cooperation he had from the government.

Wolseley and his officers left England on the 12th September 1873 and arrived off Cape Coast Castle on 2nd October. It was this group of officers who became known as the ‘Ashanti ring’, and later the ‘Wolseley ring’. In the years ahead they would serve together on many occasions under his leadership, and over time others would be added to this group. They were of a different style of officer from that which was commonly found in the British army during this period, and perhaps nothing illustrates this better than the voyage to Africa. The normal sea-borne entertainments were replaced by hard study of the material concerning the area and the Ashanti themselves that had been provided by the War Office and through private means. Brackenbury and Captain George Huyshe gave a series of lectures on the Ashanti and

Fanti and the whole approach was of a level of sophistication that was largely alien to the British Army.⁷ It was in fact a professional campaign at a time when the professional soldier was looked upon with suspicion. This was still an era where social background was more important than ability. Officership was in many quarters essentially a reflection of social status. It was therefore not an occupation demanding hard study. The man who took his job seriously was obviously not a gentleman. Those who did take their military careers seriously and studied their profession were somewhat outcast. Wolseley fell into this category as did the majority of his officers on this campaign. The difference was that on this campaign they were amongst like-minded officers.

Brackenbury's own appointment had been something of a surprise, not least to himself. On hearing of the proposed expedition he, like countless others who were keen to see action, wrote immediately to Wolseley offering his services in whatever capacity the commander thought best. Brackenbury did have a slightly better chance than many because his writing had made him well known and had brought him into contact with Wolseley at several meetings. Brackenbury had hoped that he might get a position concerning transport, given his experiences in the Franco-Prussian War, although he seems to have been doubtful of even this. He felt that he would be "looked upon as only a theorist a writer and a teacher".⁸ He was genuinely surprised to receive Wolseley's offer to be his Military Secretary. The reasons for this can be found in Brackenbury's career to date. He had seen some, rather limited, active service during the Indian Mutiny and had served at the battle of Banda. He was therefore not completely untested in battle. Perhaps more importantly he had recently witnessed at first hand the Franco-Prussian War, and had probably got the best 'view' of any serving British officer. As we have already seen, many had doubted the

usefulness of studying European war as a guide to colonial conflict; other contemporary authors asserted that the Franco-Prussian War should be fully digested as the definitive guide to war. This point of view was also an exaggeration, but it does illustrate the importance that would have been attached to Brackenbury's experience of this campaign. His work during the Franco-Prussian war had also shown his considerable organisational and administrative ability. His writing would also have appealed to Wolseley, as a large part of them had been devoted to military reform, a subject close to Wolseley's heart and one on which he and Brackenbury shared the same general outlook. It is likely, and indeed logical, that as Brackenbury was currently employed as a Professor of Military History at Woolwich Wolseley would have had him in mind to give the lectures, as he subsequently did, to his officers regarding the forthcoming campaign. Whatever the reason his appointment was the start of an association that would see him rise and benefit from the patronage of Wolseley.

The level to which he was dependent upon his favour is impossible to gauge. If he owed his subsequent success to Wolseley he was far from being the only one. It would be nice to think that an officer of Brackenbury's undoubted ability would have been successful without patronage from one source or another, but it is unlikely. What Wolseley saw as Brackenbury's strengths many would have seen as his weaknesses. As Joseph Lehmann wrote, "Most Commanders would have passed over the bookish soldier in organising a staff for active service", but he "proved tireless and thorough, and soon demonstrated that he was a superb staff officer and an ideal military secretary, thereby vindicating his chief's estimate".⁹ Lehmann also referred to Brackenbury as a "scholastic soldier", a comment which he undoubtedly meant as a

compliment but which many of Brackenbury's contemporaries may well have used as an insult. This says a lot about the way in which staff work, particularly in this era, was viewed. For a campaign as complex as the Gold Coast involving issues of time, geographical, medical, financial and political considerations, a smooth running staff system was vital. This required a number of top class administrators and organisers, indeed 'managers' rather than pure and simple fighting men, who were forced into doing staff work. Wolseley understood the importance of staff work in a successful campaign and the Ashanti campaign illustrates this more than most. Attention to detail was seen on a scale unknown for a colonial campaign of this nature and this was the key for the quick and relatively easy success. The Ashanti were a fearsome warrior nation and whilst the modern equipment of the British should have proved enough to defeat the Ashanti on its own, the quality of planning and staff work made victory assured. There were many occasions when failure to pay attention to such things caused embarrassing setbacks for the British in other campaigns, most notably the Zulu War, and meant that more troops, and therefore further expenditure, became necessary.

Yet whilst Brackenbury appreciated the importance of such work, and had a flair for it, he constantly wanted to prove himself as a fighting soldier. Brackenbury's comments, looked at earlier in this chapter, about the way he felt he would be perceived say a lot about the way he felt he had to prove himself in this capacity. He constantly pushed himself to forward positions where he could engage in the attack. During the campaign Brackenbury persuaded Wolseley to send him forward during the action at Essaman to assist Captain Crease and his Marines. Crease led the attack on the hill whilst Brackenbury, supported by another of Wolseley's staff officers keen for action, Lieutenant Charteris, led the frontal assault on the village. It is perhaps

worth noting here that the Ashanti marksmanship surprised everyone with its accuracy and rapidity of fire, despite the age of their weapons. So such an attack was a far from easy one, and leading it illustrated his fighting qualities.

Brackenbury played a key role in what seemed a meticulous campaign. Extraordinary lengths were undertaken to maintain the health of the British troops that arrived in December 1873. Whilst many of these precautions might seem very logical, such as lightweight clothing, protection from the sun and medical precautions, they were far from common on such campaigns. By the time British troops arrived Wolseley had already had several clashes with the Ashanti, but the poor conduct of the locally raised soldiers had given him the justification he wanted to call for British troops. By the time they arrived preparation to ease their suffering had been put into affect, mostly by the work of Major Robert Home. He had constructed seven 'way-stations' at ten-mile intervals between Cape Coast and Prasu, which was to operate as the forward base for the attacking force. The 'way-stations' had accommodation for 400 men, hospital facilities, water purifiers, ablutions and stores. Some even had fully equipped bakeries and abattoirs. Further precautions were taken for the march itself. A native carrier was assigned to every three soldiers to assist in the carrying of equipment, which included respirators, veils and cholera belts, and a dose of quinine was given to each man in his tea before the start of the march. Even the uniforms were made especially for the campaign as Wolseley had felt that both the home and colonial service uniforms were unsuitable to the peculiar conditions of the region. As a result of these precautions the casualties caused by disease and fever were enormously reduced. During the campaign the enemy killed 18 men and 55 were killed by disease out of a force of a little over 1,500 Europeans. Compare such results

with the earlier despatch of 100 Royal Marines of whom 10 were killed and 58 had to be invalided home, and Wolseley's precautions to preserve the health of his troops are dramatically justified. More importantly for the British government the whole expedition had cost only £800,000, which was slightly less than they had budgeted for.¹⁰

Everything the government wanted had been achieved. British honour was restored without too much trouble. It is no wonder that a good deal of praise was heaped on the leadership and men who had achieved it. They had gone into an area which was largely thought to be a 'white mans graveyard' and despite difficult conditions and terrain, unreliable allies, and a far from easy opponent who greatly outnumbered them, had met with complete success. British technological superiority was obviously a crucial factor but there were many other campaigns where similar superiority counted for little because preparations had been inadequate. The campaign showed quite clearly the advantages of having a properly functioning staff that understood its work and did it efficiently and effectively. Wolseley was later to attribute most of the political success of the campaign to Brackenbury.¹¹ Of course the campaign did take its toll on members of Wolseley's staff, partly because of the sheer volume of work, but also because they had been in the region longer than any other Europeans. By the end of the campaign Brackenbury alone amongst the staff had not succumbed to fever at one point or another.

Brackenbury returned home to undertake an immense task. He had suggested to Wolseley that he write a narrative of the campaign. Wolseley, who was keen that officers should read about, debate, and learn from campaigns, agreed enthusiastically. Brackenbury used his literary links to obtain a contract from John Blackwood, with

the aim of producing the book quickly while it was still in the public consciousness. Brackenbury also felt obliged to produce it speedily as Blackwood had agreed to meet any loss that the book made, and so it was doubly important that it was produced whilst the events were still fresh in the public memory. There were slight delays over obtaining official papers, which Wolseley overcame on his behalf, but once that was done Brackenbury wrote, revised and saw printed two volumes containing 795 pages all together, in only six weeks!¹² He worked between twelve and fourteen hours a day, assisted by two shorthand writers, to whom he would dictate for around two hours a day. The book was a complete success. The whole edition was sold, and has subsequently been reprinted many times. It is still considered by many to be the most complete and informative account of the campaign, although given the short period of time in which it was produced it obviously does not have the depth of detail and analysis that some subsequent works written over longer period have. Unsurprisingly, the effort of writing this book led to a serious deterioration in Brackenbury's health. As he later recalled, "During the preparation of this book I was unable to take any exercise or recreation, and in consequence suffered, after the first three weeks, from insomnia, and for the last fortnight took chloral every night. Yet the book never left my mind even in my sleep. I consulted a doctor, who advised me strongly to take a rest, saying I was running a serious risk of brain fever".¹³ Despite the medical advice Brackenbury carried on until it was finished and then rushed off to Switzerland to recover.

Natal

Despite his success, by the end of 1874 Brackenbury's career had stalled. He had hoped that his service in Ashanti would see him promoted to more interesting work but instead he found himself back with the Royal Artillery and posted to Sheerness,

which he described as “one of the dullest quarters”.¹⁴ He was unhappy with his appointment and his failure to be promoted a brevet Lieutenant Colonel, which he believed had been promised to him. At this point he was considering leaving the army, and had received some offers of work in the City. He consulted Wolseley who asked him to wait before making a decision.¹⁵ A few days later Wolseley informed him that he had been asked to go to Natal as Governor and General Officer Commanding, and wanted Brackenbury to go with him. Wolseley was sent because it was felt he could handle the delicate political situation, but also the growing unrest amongst the African tribes. Wolseley’s role ended up being almost entirely political. Brackenbury became his private secretary and clerk of the executive council. This was not really a demanding job, and he filled his time by helping to run the government newspaper *The Times of Natal* and by giving a series of public lectures in Pietermaritzburg on ‘Incidents of the Ashanti War’.¹⁶ He did, along with Colonel Sir George Colley and Sir Napier Broome, play a major part in the reform, and in some cases creation, of public services in Natal. However his time there was remembered more for his social life rather than his professional duties.¹⁷

In October 1875 Brackenbury returned to England with Wolseley and received the promotion to brevet Lieutenant Colonel that he had hoped for the year before. He was given command of a field battery at Woolwich, an appointment that he seemed to find far more acceptable than Sheerness.¹⁸ The main task was to train recruits to be sent to India each autumn. Woolwich seemed to be where he was at his happiest, particularly when he was in either a training or teaching role. Before his major administrative appointments the only time he talked of happiness in his work was when he was teaching military history during this second period at Woolwich. He was very

disappointed when in late 1877 he was moved to the command of a garrison battery at Dover, which next year moved on to Newhaven. Both postings met with the same level of enthusiasm as Sheerness. Undoubtedly part of the problem was location which in all three instances he described as 'dreary', largely because a lack of 'society' in which he could ingratiate himself, but he also disliked the appointments because he had too little to do.¹⁹ There was nothing in his work to tax him, no problems of organisation, strategy or supply that he had to solve. His dislike of such appointments highlights three things. Firstly, there was his liking for the social trappings of high society, which was often missing in these appointments. Secondly, his general dislike of regimental duty, but more than that there was his desire to serve beyond and above the Royal Artillery. Thirdly, it is an illustration of his genuine enjoyment of hard and demanding administrative work be that in terms of organisation, strategy or supply. This is also further illustrated by the fact that he found his previous appointment of commanding a depot more interesting than commanding a battery, a preference that few in the army would share.

Cyprus

In July 1878 he was saved from the tedium of Newhaven. Wolseley had been appointed Lord High Commissioner of the newly acquired 'colony' of Cyprus, granted to Britain as a base from which to counter any Russian attempt to dominate or break out of the Black Sea. Brackenbury had already written an article on the need for a British base in the area, but he had suggested Crete as a more suitable location.²⁰ Initially a detachment of the Indian Army was deployed to Cyprus at the height of the crisis with Russia.²¹ On arrival Brackenbury was appointed Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master General to this force, but within only a few weeks the crisis had abated and the Indian troops were removed.²² However, Wolseley and his staff

remained and Brackenbury was now without a position. He was also prepared to leave Cyprus but was asked by Wolseley to become Chief Commandant of Police and Inspector of Prisons. Wolseley needed Brackenbury's organisational skills and his main task was to enlarge and reorganise the Zaptieths (who were a military police force of Turkish origin). This force consisted of 200 mounted and 400 foot. Certain parts of the island were particularly lawless, and Brackenbury and his police were sent by Wolseley to "bring order". He was also given the task of reforming and remodelling the prison system. During this time he was also involved in a controversial legal case. Brackenbury, despite the fact that his entire legal career consisted of just two years in a notary's office in Quebec, was chief prosecutor in the case against Mr Cesnola who was accused of breaking into the ancient tombs on the island, something that was illegal under the Turkish law which the British authorities upheld, and of taking artefacts from the country without government permission.²³ The complication came, as Lord Wolseley explained in his journal, because despite being an Italian, Mr Cesnola was also a United States citizen. The possible diplomatic repercussions were obviously a major concern for Wolseley, but in the end the U.S government was unsympathetic towards Mr Cesnola. Brackenbury disliked Cyprus, again because of its lack of 'society' and the living conditions, but this time he had no complaint about the work, which he later wrote he had enjoyed and found challenging.²⁴

In April 1879 Brackenbury returned to England, and whilst on leave was approached by the Foreign Office as to whether he would consider returning to Cyprus as Chief Secretary.²⁵ Technically this was a civilian position, but at the time the majority of the administration of the island was under military rule. In short he would have been

senior administrator on Cyprus, and de facto deputy to the High Commissioner.

Whilst interested in the offer he was reluctant to accept as he thought it might restrict his chances of further active service. This decision was arrived at after consultation with Wolseley who pointed out that both the High Commissioner and Chief Secretary could not be absent from the island at the same time, and Wolseley assured him that if he were to obtain a further active service command then he would want Brackenbury with him. With the agreement of the Foreign Office the offer was refused.

Zulu War and Sekukuni Expedition

Within a short while the wisdom of his decision was proved. After Lord Chelmsford's failure to bring the Zulu War to a successful conclusion, not to mention the disaster of Isandlwana, the British government decided, on the 21st May 1878, to send Wolseley to take command. The decision to replace Chelmsford unleashed the wrath of the Queen and the Commander-in-Chief in the direction of Wolseley and his staff. The Queen called Wolseley an 'egotist and a braggart' (to which her Prime Minister, Disraeli, reminded her 'so was Nelson').²⁶ The Duke took the opportunity to attack Wolseley's selection of the same old staff.²⁷ Cambridge actually tried to block the appointment of Wolseley's staff, and it was only after the direct intervention of the Secretary of State for War that the appointments were eventually confirmed. Wolseley and his staff departed on 29th May, arriving in Cape Town on 23rd June 1878. He then sailed for Port Durnford to join General Crealock's column, and from there to join Chelmsford and take over command. Unfortunately bad weather made it impossible to land and because of this Wolseley was unable to reach Chelmsford before the latter fought the decisive battle of Ulundi. As a result all that was left for Wolseley to do was to capture the Zulu King Cetewayo and settle the political division of Zululand. Brackenbury and Wolseley stayed on after most of the troops had returned to Britain

and India. With Colonel Colley returning to his appointment in India, Brackenbury was appointed Wolseley's Chief of Staff. It was during this appointment that the campaign against Chief Sekukuni was organised and executed. Sekukuni was a chief who had taken advantage of British preoccupation with the Zulus to defy colonial rule. He operated from a mountain top camp which had proved too much for several colonial and Boer attacks. The campaign against him was brilliantly organised and triumphed where others had failed. The success was, according to Wolseley, largely down to the meticulous attention to detail that Brackenbury had once more lavished on the plans.²⁸ This enabled Wolseley to confidently report to the War Office exactly how long and how much the campaign would cost, which was much to their delight as in the wake of the Zulu War the last thing they wanted was a potential disaster or another expensive operation. Wolseley had boasted to the War Office before the campaign began that he would have occupied Sekukuni's capital by the 28th November. The fact that he was able to achieve this was largely down to the excellent planning of his Chief of Staff. This led to Brackenbury being described, by Wolseley, as "without question the most able administrator in the army".²⁹ Brackenbury again wrote of his experiences, although he waited twenty years, in supplying one of the few accounts of the campaign.³⁰ The operation was overshadowed at the time by the campaign of Lord Roberts in Afghanistan. The only other point of note during this campaign was that Brackenbury again took the opportunity to prove his fighting credentials by joining Lieutenant Colonel Baker Russell and his men in the final charge against Sekukuni's mountain fortress.

India

Brackenbury left South Africa to take up an appointment as private secretary to the

Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, and again he replaced Colonel Colley. Again Brackenbury worked tirelessly at his duties, usually only taking a break during mealtimes when he ordered that he was not to be disturbed with telegrams or work of any kind. This is an interesting insight into his working practice. Brackenbury believed in working late at night and into the small hours of the morning. He later wrote, “My experience has always been that the early morning is the best time for study and taking in ideas, night the best time for giving out thoughts”.³¹ His friend, the novelist and civil servant Anthony Trollope, was critical. Trollope preferred to get up early in the morning and work for several hours before breakfast. He told Brackenbury that whilst, “I give the freshest hours of the day to my work; you give the fag end of the day to yours”.³² Brackenbury’s demanding practice of work undoubtedly contributed to his continuing poor health. We have already seen that after the Ashanti campaign he worked himself to the point of collapse and had to spend several weeks recuperating. This seems to have been his usual pattern. After the Gordon Relief Expedition, and again the pressure of writing a book in the immediate aftermath, his health failed him, and he spent several weeks staying with friends at Taplow, Buckinghamshire, in an effort to recover.³³

During his appointment he and Lytton became good friends and Brackenbury enjoyed his work. Unfortunately his appointment was brief. When the Conservative Government of Lord Beaconsfield left office Lord Lytton also resigned as the Liberal opposition had been highly critical of the government’s policies in India. Although Brackenbury was not obliged to resign with him he felt honour bound to do so and in the late summer of 1880 returned home.

Military Attaché in Paris

There was no work for him and he was placed on half pay until December when he was offered the appointment of Military Attaché to the British Embassy in Paris. In the past he had turned down similar appointments, most notably to Vienna.³⁴ The fact that he was on half-pay played an important part in his acceptance of the position, but he was also motivated by the thought that with his friends and contacts in the French Army he would be able to achieve a great deal.³⁵ A particular advantage was his friendship with Marshal and Madame Canrobert. The role of Military Attaché is easiest described as an 'open spy'. He was part of the diplomatic mission to the country in question, charged with military matters that arose. The attaché represented the military of his nation in the host country, but he had no negotiating authority. His job was in short to find out as much as he could and to get as close as he could to the French military.

He began work on 1st January 1881 with great expectations, but soon found that his contacts and friends were not as much use as he had hoped. His friends were mostly of the imperialist faction of the army who were much out of favour since the end of the Franco-Prussian War. Not only did this mean that he was unable to get much assistance from them but that he was also treated with suspicion by a considerable section of the French army because of his associations. Yet his contacts were able to gain him access to the French army's manoeuvres in 1881, and this included the whole of the manoeuvres rather than the final corps against corps action, which was all that most attaches ever got to see.³⁶ He had more success with his political contacts via the Waddington family.³⁷ Brackenbury had been at Woolwich with Richard Waddington, who had later left the army and entered the family business, which

included several cotton mills in Rouen. Through him Brackenbury was introduced to William Waddington, a prominent French politician who later became Prime Minister of France. As a result of this friendship Brackenbury was invited to occasions that would not normally have been open to Military Attaches. He later wrote, “I particularly remember a dejeuner given by Richard Waddington where I was not only the only foreigner present, but the only man who was not either a Depute or a Senateur”.³⁸ Despite not being of high birth or particularly wealthy, Brackenbury seemed to have an endless supply of contacts and friends in high places that throughout his career were able to assist him. He was never solely reliant on Wolseley. Undoubtedly his military career benefited from this assistance immensely but had he not received it he may well have been one of the many eminent Victorians who started off in the army and later made their name in another profession. Wolseley himself had no doubt that Brackenbury could have reached “a very high position” had he made politics his career.³⁹

It was also during his appointment in France that he first met Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, later Secretary of State for War, and even later Prime Minister.⁴⁰

Brackenbury was able to obtain leave for Campbell-Bannerman to visit some French military establishments, which he wanted to see in connection with his work as Financial Secretary to the War Office. Brackenbury also took the opportunity of learning much from Marshal Canrobert about his campaigns and his ideas on military planning. His professional interest in most aspects of soldiering also led him to take a tour of the Franco-Italian border where the political tensions between the two nations had led to significant military preparations being undertaken along both sides of the border. Obviously, if there was to be war between the two nations, as did seem quite

possible at one stage, the War Office would want to know all it could. It must be added that he was working under his own initiative here and not on instructions from London. He also sent information to Wolseley through private channels along with anything else he felt the latter should know about. Another example of this is the information that he gained from French Intelligence concerning the situation in Egypt. It was based on this intelligence that Wolseley concluded, correctly, that a British expedition was imminent.⁴¹ Brackenbury continued to hold the position until May 1882 when he was to make another move that was to very nearly end his military career.

Ireland and disappointment

In May 1882 Brackenbury returned home from Paris on a few days leave. The first news he heard when he returned to England on 7th May was of the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish, Chief Secretary to the Viceroy of Ireland, in Phoenix Park, Dublin. It had been carried out by a Fenian assassination squad called the Irish National Invincibles, which had been born out of the insistence of the Fenian's American backers that more aggressive means were needed to fight the cause of a free Ireland. The murder had several political ramifications. Not only was Cavendish the son of the Seventh Duke of Devonshire and brother to the influential politician Lord Hartington but he was also married to the niece of the then Prime Minister, Gladstone. It is believed that his murder was due to bad luck, as the real target had been Thomas Henry Burke, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Ireland and the senior civil servant in Ireland.⁴² Burke had been selected as the target not only because of his office, but also because he was a Roman Catholic and viewed by the Fenians as a traitor. It was unfortunate timing that Cavendish happened to be walking across Phoenix Park with him at that moment, something that was unplanned and was therefore the main reason

for concluding that Burke was the actual target. They had nearly reached the Viceregal lodge when four men jumped from a cab and attacked them. The murder came as a great shock to the British government and establishment in general, unused as they were to political assassinations. Moreover, the murders were particularly gruesome. Rather than being simply stabbed the men were ‘slashed’ and thus suffered greatly before death. In fairness it does have to be stated that the murders were condemned by the majority of other Fenian Groups and by Irish Nationalists in general. Charles Stewart Parnell, the leader of the Irish Nationalists at Westminster, publicly condemned what he called “these vile murders”.⁴³

Brackenbury had sent word of his arrival in London from Paris saying that he would be busy on Monday but would call at the War Office on Tuesday in case the Commander-in-Chief or the Adjutant-General wished to see him.⁴⁴ Late on Monday evening he was informed that the War Office had been trying to contact him all day. Early on Tuesday morning he met with Hugh Childers, the Secretary of State for War who informed him that the Government wanted Brackenbury to go to Ireland as the head of police. It must be remembered that at this time it was common for soldiers to be employed in such capacities at home and in the empire. Brackenbury was reluctant to take the job. He was happy in Paris and believed that war would soon come in Egypt and that Wolseley was bound to take him with him. According to Brackenbury he tried to refuse but was told by Childers that, “It is war in Ireland, the Government have selected you, and I do not think you can refuse”.⁴⁵ Brackenbury later wrote that because of this he felt he had to accept. More likely is the fact that Childers appealed to his ego. In a letter written by Brackenbury to Wolseley three days after his appointment there is nothing about his reluctance to take the job. Instead he wrote of

how, “When I was first offered this post I don’t think I quite realised its importance”.⁴⁶ It was obvious that he had been persuaded that this job was a great honour and promotion. Also, given Brackenbury’s snobbishness, he would have been greatly honoured to know that Gladstone, Lord Spencer and Lord Hartington had recommended him for this position.

Why was Brackenbury considered to be the best man for the job? Both Gladstone and Lord Spencer had been advised by Wolseley that Brackenbury would be ideally suited to it.⁴⁷ Lord Hartington was more likely to have been motivated by his family friendship with Brackenbury. The two men were friends and Brackenbury stayed at the family home of Chatsworth House on several occasions as the guest of the 6th, 7th and 8th Dukes of Devonshire. Lord Hartington was an important figure within the Liberal party, and seen as the leader of the Liberal Unionists, who were later to break with the Liberal Party and support the Conservatives. This, along with Wolseley’s recommendation, probably did much to influence Gladstone’s decision, perhaps hoping that the appointment of a close friend of the family would appease the Cavendish family or at least convince them the government was acting.

The political balance had a further role to play as the murder of his brother had turned Hartington against Home Rule for Ireland, which was Gladstone’s great crusade. The Viceroy of Ireland Lord Spencer had wanted to replace the head of the Royal Irish Constabulary, Colonel George Hillier, and had asked Wolseley whom he recommended. Wolseley replied Brackenbury, and thus Lord Spencer asked Gladstone to obtain his services.⁴⁸ There were of course other reasons why his appointment was appropriate other than political expediency. Brackenbury’s career to date had highlighted him as a top class administrator who would be able to organise

the Irish police forces in a unit that could fight the Fenian threat. He also had his experience in Cyprus. The similarities were greater than might at first be thought. They were both in a sense ‘occupying’ police forces. The Cyprus police force he led was largely made up of Turks and was in effect the same force that had represented the Porte. Although largely Irish in composition the Royal Irish Constabulary was seen as the force of the ‘occupying’ power in a very similar way to that in Cyprus. They were also both a military style of police, and thus it was perhaps no surprise that a soldier should be its commander.

Brackenbury arrived in Dublin on the 13th May, but as yet without an official position. The government had asked him to “take charge of the police” but there was no further detail on what this meant as at that time both the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C) and the Dublin Metropolitan Police (D.M.P) were without a commander. It was not until the 17th May that Lord Spencer confirmed that Brackenbury was to be Chief Special Commissioner, although this was later changed to Assistant Under Secretary for Police and Crime with the main task of organising a force to counter the Fenian threat. Confusion seems to have reigned at this time. Lord Spencer had asked for, and obtained the resignation of the commanders of the R.I.C and the D.M.P. It had been presumed that as the R.I.C was a quasi-military organisation that this would be the best place for Brackenbury. With the resignation of Colonel George Hillier from this position it had been explained to his deputy, Colonel Robert Bruce, that he would not be promoted. However ten days later there was a change yet again. Spencer decided that Brackenbury should have an overseeing view of both institutions. Thus Bruce, who ten days previously had been informed by Lord Spencer that he was not considered up to the job, was promoted commander of the R.I.C. This helps to illustrate the chaos and confusion, mostly caused by political indecision, which

greeted Brackenbury in Ireland.⁴⁹

Even before he arrived Brackenbury had set about obtaining all the information available on the Fenian organisations. He had already talked at length with Robert Anderson at the Home Office, along with Inspector Williamson and members of the detection force who were responsible for such matters.⁵⁰ He also visited the Chief of Detection police in Paris, and found that at the present time this was the most active centre for the Fenian organisations. Paris was where most of their finance was coming from, albeit via a number of the other countries, most notably the United States. He discovered that Chicago, Philadelphia and New York were the main areas of support and organisation in the United States. Shortly after his appointment he wrote a long, confidential, memorandum to Lord Spencer, setting out what he had found and giving a series of recommendations.⁵¹ Whilst noting that the majority of support was coming from overseas, he stressed the importance of keeping a close watch on Liverpool, where its large Irish community and geographical proximity to Ireland made it an ideal base for Fenian groups. Brackenbury's investigations led him to believe that an order had been given for the Fenian groups to remain quiet for the moment for fear of further British action, but that in the meantime they were continuing to organise "small secret assassination gangs" for use in Ireland and England.⁵²

In terms of combating the Fenian groups Brackenbury did not believe that the forces then available were sufficient for the task. Whilst praising the Police for what they had done, he felt that they needed strengthening to act against such powerful secret organisations. Brackenbury proposed the creation of a new organisation. "To combat them, there must be a secret organisation formed, whose agents must work their way into its most important seats of administration and of action. Informers must be

brought, and men must be paid to enter these societies, work into the confidence of their leaders and betray them".⁵³ Such an organisation had to be separate from the police and Brackenbury felt he knew of enough appropriate people to operate it. By the 22nd May Lord Spencer had received Treasury permission to create such a group which would be above the normal duties of the police and would coordinate all the various groups with responsibility for security. It was in short an intelligence branch for Ireland. It is not surprising that the creation of such a group led to Brackenbury being called Ireland's first 'Spymaster-General'.⁵⁴

Despite the government, and in particular the Treasury, agreeing to the creation of such a group they were still reluctant to pay for it. Brackenbury did not help matters by putting his 'conditions' in terms that sounded like demands. He insisted upon total autonomy for the new organisation and that it be left entirely in his hands to employ agents as he saw fit. The Government were not happy with this but might have been persuaded to go along with it, but they flatly refused the £20,000 a year that Brackenbury wanted for the organisation. Nor would they accept his request that all informers be pardoned for their criminal offences, which Brackenbury later withdrew on the understanding that their assistance would be taken into account at any trial. The Government in turn offered £5,000, with further money dependent on results, but Brackenbury refused to start the work unless the Government pledged to support him to the amount he had requested. He suggested that it was possible that he might at any point,

...hook a big fish, and if the money required to land him is dependent upon my explaining the measure of success I have obtained, and setting to work the slow machinery of the Treasury, I should only have wasted my time and the Government's money. The matter is of such a serious nature that I can only attempt it upon the conditions I have myself laid down.⁵⁵

The Viceroy supported Brackenbury and argued his case with Gladstone, stating that the amount that he was asking for was about the same as the money that the government had offered in rewards for information leading to the conviction of Fenian terrorists. Lord Spencer wrote to Gladstone, "I feel the absolute necessity of dealing a vigorous blow at the societies which exist in Ireland.... His proposals should I think be adopted".⁵⁶ This highlights the difference in opinion there was between London and Dublin on the seriousness of the current situation. There is an obvious correlation between the respective distances of the individuals. In fact Brackenbury was critical of the somewhat overdramatic measures that certain members of the Dublin government took to protect themselves after the Phoenix Park murders.⁵⁷ Yet the government in London seemed to have already lost interest. Brackenbury wrote of the importance of what he was proposing saying that, "If we can break up one secret society, if we can only make the leaders feel that there is no safety, that they are being betrayed, their terrible confederations will fall to pieces".⁵⁸

Brackenbury was frustrated with the position in which he had been placed. He had been reluctant to take the position but had been persuaded to take it by the same government who were now blocking his efforts. Brackenbury could not understand why they had been so insistent on him taking the job if they would not allow him to do it the way he wanted. Gladstone's government would have liked to do nothing about the Phoenix Park murders but party politics made this impossible. They came just after the Kilmainham Treaty, which helped to resolve the land issue, which seemed to suggest that Ireland's problems could be resolved by negotiation. However the political situation within the Liberal Party meant that something had to be seen to be done. Parallels, although on a lesser scale, can be drawn with the same

governments handling of the crisis in the Sudan a few years later. Again the governments response was to send one man, in that case Charles Gordon. Both appointments were largely due to pressure that was being placed on them by the press, parliament and the public. Neither man was given specific instructions nor any help or suggestion as to how to accomplish their task. In fact Brackenbury's position was even worse. When Gordon arrived in the Sudan he was Governor General, when Brackenbury arrived in Ireland he still had no specific post. Brackenbury was not happy. He had made his recommendations and had outlined the establishment of a scheme which he felt would deal with the Fenian threat. The very government which had insisted upon his appointment were now unwilling to assist him. Money now seemed to be the main problem with Brackenbury refusing to undertake the work unless he knew the money had been committed, and the government unwilling to fund the project unless they had evidence of results. Both views have their merit, but it does once again raise the question over what the government expected Brackenbury to achieve. If no new money was being provided for his work, it could be argued that they expected him simply to reorganise and develop existing forces and resources. However, this was clearly not what the Viceroy Lord Spencer and Prime Minister Gladstone had agreed.

Brackenbury's disenchantment with Ireland grew as news of the expedition to Egypt became public. Wolseley was to lead and Brackenbury felt sure he would be called upon. Confusion reigned as each man expected the other to ask him. Wolseley took Brackenbury's silence as evidence that the latter felt his work in Ireland too important to relinquish.⁵⁹ As a result the official list of officers was compiled minus Brackenbury's name. Wolseley was keen to obtain his service and tried to have his

name added to the list but met with the objection of the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge, who replied that no names could be added.⁶⁰ What he really meant was that Brackenbury's name could not be added. The Duke of Cambridge was partly motivated by a dislike of Brackenbury and also because he resented Wolseley's appointment of the same staff time after time. Brackenbury sought Lord Spencer's permission to resign to join the expedition, hoping that if he travelled to Egypt he would be able to serve in one capacity or another. Lord Spencer was reluctant to let Brackenbury go for two reasons. Firstly, he had already lost several members of his staff to this expedition and secondly, he felt that the work Brackenbury was doing was more important than that of the expedition. As a result Lord Spencer insisted that Brackenbury must resign if he wanted to go which Brackenbury did.⁶¹ The government took grave offence and he was refused permission to even travel to Egypt. Brackenbury's actions were seen as disloyalty. The Home Secretary, William Harcourt, described Brackenbury's behaviour as 'infamous' and 'deceitful'.⁶² The government had asked him to perform a task, albeit not one which he joined the army to perform, and he had let them down. They now used the argument that the situation in Ireland was far more important and dangerous than Egypt, which was different to the view they had taken when they were arguing against providing the money Brackenbury had requested. At that point Gladstone himself had written that Brackenbury was exaggerating the danger and that the situation was not as bad as it had been thirty-five years ago when he had been responsible for Ireland.⁶³ This illustrates how Brackenbury was caught up in a political web. Firstly the Government told him the situation was extremely serious, indeed he was told it was 'War in Ireland'; then when he asked for money to perform his duties, duties which they had asked him to undertake against his better judgement, the Prime Minister declared that

the situation was not as serious as it had been thirty five years ago and that Brackenbury was exaggerating. Finally, they went back to their starting position declaring that the situation was extremely serious. It is not surprising that Brackenbury lost patience and longed to get away from Ireland, especially when there was the added incentive of another campaign with Wolseley.

There does seem to be genuine surprise at Brackenbury's decision, which is hard to understand, given that it had been difficult to persuade him to take the job in the first place. He had then been frustrated that the Government had then rejected his proposals, on grounds of cost when they were already 'wasting' this amount of money on rewards that were never collected. Brackenbury was now being expected to sit back and watch as the other members of Wolseley's staff undertook a campaign, which as Brackenbury himself pointed out was why he was in the army. His views were expressed in a letter to Lord Spencer. "I am above all things a soldier, and on no consideration, and for no inducements would I give up the profession that had been my life's work. While thoroughly willing to help the Government in any way in time of peace, in war I think I should be released for my proper work".⁶⁴ The problem was perhaps a much wider one than would first appear. The lack of any properly trained general staff meant that for every campaign such things were organised on a very ad hoc basis. Someone like Brackenbury was an ideal staff officer yet because there was no permanent staff arrangement he had to be found various positions during times of peace. Only so many of these appointments could be found within the Army itself. Consequently Brackenbury found himself in such positions as in Ireland or Paris or Cyprus, whereas in the continental armies he would have certainly been a member of the general staff where his skills could have been put to better use.

Brackenbury had a different view of soldiering from that widely prevalent in Britain at the time. He was fully aware of the importance of the planning and administration of any campaign, especially as more often than not during the period of colonial campaigning they were fighting the elements and conditions as much as the enemy. Brackenbury knew that this was where his talents lay. In a letter to Wolseley, that is taken slightly out of context and is often used to criticise him as a non-fighting soldier, Brackenbury complained that his ambitions were not being fulfilled as, “Never once have I been asked to serve on a committee or a commission, or in any way whatever to help in the work of organisation or administration of the Army”.⁶⁵

This may sound a strange complaint for a soldier to make but it makes a pleasant change from the norm. It must be remembered that many of the ‘disasters’ that the army suffered were as a result of poor planning and administration: very rarely, if ever, were they because of the poor fighting quality of the troops. Wolseley, who understood the importance of administration for a campaign, was always keen to use Brackenbury’s services and often praised him as the best administrator and most intelligent thinker in the army. Yet the British army of this period was not one that looked kindly upon such officers.

Brackenbury had tried to withdraw his resignation when it became clear that his decision was extremely unpopular with the government and also that his chances of service in Egypt appeared nil. However, Lord Spencer insisted upon him resigning. As he told Gladstone, “I felt I would have no real confidence in a man ready to throw up duties of such vast importance as these which he did undertake to carry out after so short a time, and for purely selfish reasons”.⁶⁶ Whilst a fair comment it does ignore the fact that Brackenbury had been prepared to miss the Egyptian Campaign for the

sake of his work in Ireland. Shortly after taking up his position Brackenbury wrote to Wolseley, "The Egyptian Crisis coming at this moment makes me feel unhappy but I have put my hand to this plough now, and I will not look back- I cannot be in two places at once; and I am sure there is work of real difficulty, if not actual danger, here, now. Work that will tax all my powers".⁶⁷ It was only the attitude of the government and their reluctance to back his ideas that changed his mind. Whilst many officers would have either accepted this or tried to work the system to their advantage that was not Brackenbury's way. He considered himself to be the expert, which was why he was employed; if they did not agree with him then get rid of him. As he said to Lord Spencer, "use me or send me away".⁶⁸ Through this experience in Ireland we see the poor way in which Brackenbury dealt with politicians, although it must be added that this was largely when they were of the Liberal Party.⁶⁹

Brackenbury not only missed the Egyptian campaign of 1882, but was also now out of work. He was placed on half pay and was returned to his regiment, the Royal Artillery, where he only held the rank of major. So whilst he had been serving as a Colonel he was now drawing the half-pay of a Major. This period saw a recommencement of his literary career as this was the only way he had of supporting himself. The position Brackenbury now faced appeared bleak. "I had lost my appointment in Paris, I was in disgrace at the War Office, and the future was black for me".⁷⁰ The position was made worse by the actions of others. The Home Secretary, who had been particularly strong in his criticism of Brackenbury's actions, now urged the Secretary of State for War, Hugh Childers, that "on no condition shall he be employed at present in any post of distinction".⁷¹ Childers, the man who had done much to persuade him in the first place, felt the same way. He also found that he had enemies at the War Office who took this as *carte blanche* to keep him out of any

appointment for as long as they could. Brackenbury later found out that chief amongst them was Lieutenant-General Sir E.A. Whitmore, the Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief, who was obviously motivated by his chief's dislike of Brackenbury, if not his direct prompting.⁷²

Gibraltar

He was eventually returned to regimental duties at Portsmouth and in April 1883 was appointed to the garrison artillery at Gibraltar. Brackenbury seemed to enjoy his new appointment. There was plenty to do because, as he told his friend T.H. Escott, "the command had fallen somewhat out of order".⁷³ He also had plenty of spare time in which to write, and for the first time in several years he started to play cricket and tennis regularly. Despite this, and the fact that a posting in Gibraltar was more in keeping with his means, he was keen to gain more 'useful' employment. He was desperate to put his career back on course, having now resolved to stay in the army despite an offer from Edward Stanhope to become Chief Agent for the Conservative Party.⁷⁴ Wolseley, as Adjutant-General, tried to get Brackenbury appointed Assistant Adjutant-General, but was thwarted in his efforts by the Secretary of State and the Commander-in-Chief. Brackenbury also pressed his case to be appointed the new Assistant Director of Military Education which as a former Professor of Military History at Woolwich he felt he was a strong candidate for.⁷⁵ Despite all his effort, and those that others undertook on his behalf, it soon became obvious to him that the coalition against him would keep him out of any important position at home for the foreseeable future. He started to look overseas, he hoped for a command in India, which was not forthcoming. He thought he had found his opportunity when it was announced that his old friend Valentine Baker was to be the commander of the newly

constituted Egyptian Army. Brackenbury wrote offering his services and was sounded out about becoming Chief of Staff with the rank of Major-General. The War Office gave their approval, doubtless pleased to get rid of him. Unfortunately Valentine Baker was still under something of a cloud in Britain for the scandal that had led him to be dismissed from the British Army.⁷⁶ The Queen in particular refused to forgive and she let it be known that she would strongly object to his appointment. That was all it took to make sure that Baker did not get the post. As a result Brackenbury missed what would have been a great appointment for him. He would have excelled at the opportunity to oversee the organisation of a whole army.

The Gordon Relief Expedition

In the early summer of 1884 Brackenbury received a letter from Lord Wolseley urging him to obtain leave from Gibraltar to go to England as an expedition to the Sudan was imminent. Wolseley was certain that he would be asked to lead it and wanted Brackenbury to go with him.⁷⁷ This time there was no problem obtaining permission to go, as the Governor of Gibraltar was General Sir John Adye, himself a distinguished soldier and fellow Royal Artillery man who could understand Brackenbury's desire for active service far more than the civilian administration in Dublin or London had been able to in 1882. Brackenbury arrived in Cairo in September 1884 and was appointed Deputy Adjutant General. It does appear that his 'sins' had not been completely forgiven by the government or the War Office. According to Wolseley both the government and the Commander-in-Chief raised objections to his appointment.⁷⁸ The Duke of Cambridge was said to be furious, but again how much of this was down to Ireland is unclear, as he was also known to object to Wolseley's decision to pick the same staff time and again and by his

personal dislike of Brackenbury. Wolseley's response was that he sought to employ only the best men for the public good saying that "H.R.H would prefer nonentities belonging to his own club, men socially agreeable to him and his own set".⁷⁹ This is an important point as there was bound to be favouritism from who ever commanded an expedition. If the Duke of Cambridge had been in command he would have appointed men, as Wolseley put it, of "his own club". In Wolseley's case they were men who had proven themselves with him in the past, and it would be wrong to say that he did not take 'new' officers with him. However, it did cause some bitterness in the army, and not just with the Duke of Cambridge, as certain elements, particularly those who had seen considerable service with the Indian army, perceived such expeditions as being closed to them. Also by this time many of the Wolseley 'ring' felt they had outgrown the patronage of Lord Wolseley and there was much discord amongst the various officers.

Brackenbury continued to serve as Deputy Adjutant General to the force until he was appointed as Chief of Staff of the River Column. The aim of the campaign was to relieve General Gordon, locked up in Khartoum and by this stage surrounded by the Mahdi's Army. Gordon had been sent by the government to evacuate the Sudan of all Egyptians and Europeans, as the Mahdi, a Muslim prophet, had rallied the Sudan in a revolt against Egyptian rule but also in a much wider Holy War to 'purify Islam'. He had gone largely unnoticed by the wider world until an Egyptian army commanded by a former British Indian Army officer and armed with modern rifles and artillery had been massacred. British influence and unofficial control in Egypt had brought with it the burden of the Sudan.⁸⁰ Gladstone's government was prepared to abandon the Sudan, and Gordon, who had previous experience there, was sent to organise the evacuation. The problem was that Gordon disobeyed his orders and refused to leave.

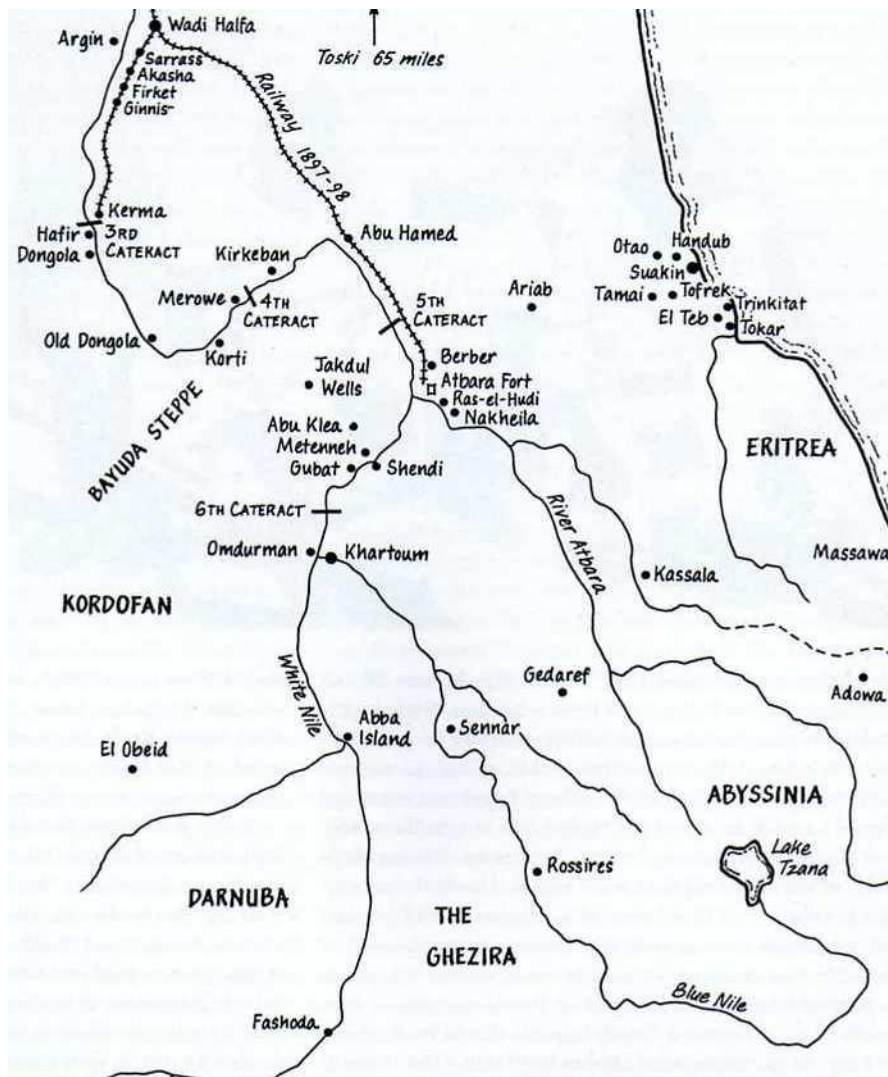
From the beginning he had been prepared to recognise the status of the Mahdi and allow him to rule a large part of the Sudan. Gordon was convinced that he could save the Sudan and given the awe in which he was held in that part of the world it was an understandable mistake. The problem now facing the British Government was what to do about him. It is impossible to explain to the modern reader the status that Gordon held in Victorian society. He was the epitome of the concept of the 'Christian Soldier' and his heroics in China and the Sudan had made him into a legend. The government tried to ignore him and hoped he would leave Khartoum of his own accord but when it became clear that he could no longer do this a military expedition had to be formed.

Wolseley's plan was to dispatch two columns to relieve Khartoum, one going via the River Nile and the other across the desert. Wolseley hoped - and with some justification - that if he could reach Gordon and relieve the siege the Mahdi's power base would start to crumble. The Desert Column would have the more difficult route and thus the majority of equipment went to them. Initially the River Column was considered as a back-up plan. General Earle, a man of proven fighting quality, commanded this column, though Wolseley had a low opinion of his ability to organise an independent command. Compelled to use Earle because of his seniority, Wolseley decided to send Brackenbury to support him. The idea was that the qualities of the two men would complement each other. Earle would be competent to lead the column in battle, but it was envisaged that the biggest obstacle would be the journey itself rather than the enemy. Wolseley was renowned for taking the issue of second-in-command seriously and it was a vote of confidence in Brackenbury's fighting abilities that Wolseley had confidence in him to command such a force if necessary.

Wolseley's decision to send a column down the Nile has been criticised as

unnecessarily complicated. He was motivated by his success in the Red River expedition in Canada in 1870, even going so far as to have Canadian style whaler boats built and shipped to Egypt along with employing Canadian boatmen, known as voyagers, who used such boats. Brackenbury faced many problems. By the time he arrived with the column much of the equipment and stores had been either stolen or lost. The Canadian's contracts were also due to run out soon due to the delay in starting the campaign and very few were keen to sign on again. There were virtually no camels available to carry baggage and to accompany the column along the banks of the Nile. It was later found that much of the tinned food and biscuit was inedible.⁸¹ The column also suffered from a lack of adequate maps for that part of the Nile, to the extent where Brackenbury commissioned one of his officers to travel the route and make a sketch of the area.⁸² However neither map correctly marked the cataract of Sherrari, which led to damage to many of the boats and caused a significant delay in the progress of the force. Consequently they were delayed by not knowing the type of conditions ahead, which made a mockery of the timetable for advancement, which Earle had given to Wolseley.

The column continued its slow and steady progress, facing little opposition until they reached Kirbekan where they were ambushed. During the action General Earle was killed and command of the column devolved upon Brackenbury. He continued the advance. It is interesting to note that Wolseley made no attempt to replace Brackenbury as he did with the Desert Column when their commander was killed. In



Map showing part of the area the Relief force had to go through. Note that when Brackenbury took command after Battle Kirbekan (marked Kirkeban on the map) he was not left with a straight route to Khartoum as he had to follow the waterways.

the case of the latter he despatched Buller to take over. Part of this may be down to the fact that the Desert column was more important to the success of the operation.

The problem that Brackenbury faced was that ahead laid the Shukook Pass which he described as a position that a few men could hold against a thousand.⁸³ He later admitted that he could have seized the pass after the battle of Kirbekan whilst the enemy was still in disarray but for his lack of mounted troops. Sending sufficient troops to take and hold it would have left the column without any mounted troops at

all, even for patrols. The lack of mounted troops was part of a much wider problem. Wolseley had been critical of Earle and Brackenbury for their lack of reconnaissance and their failure to provide him with sufficient intelligence.⁸⁴ However with only one half squadron of the 19th Hussars there was little more they could have done. In the end the column moved through the pass with little trouble, taking only two days, rather than the week that Wolseley had expected. The column continued to make good progress and Brackenbury was confident they could defeat the enemy that lay ahead. However events elsewhere changed the picture. Khartoum had fallen and Gordon was dead. The Desert Column was struggling, through casualties and a transport system that was near to collapse. Both columns were short of supplies and no-one knew what the aim of the campaign was anymore. Brackenbury was ordered to proceed and make contact with the Desert Column. However Buller, who had taken command of it, decided to withdraw without reference to Wolseley. Subsequently, on the 24th February, Brackenbury received an order from Wolseley to retire with the column. There have been many who have been critical of Brackenbury's decision to withdraw, but it was clearly an order.⁸⁵ Even if it had not been an order it would have been foolhardy to continue. The column was short of supplies and was not equipped for a major battle. Without the hope of joining up with the Desert Column there was no point to their progress.

Brackenbury withdrew without incident and acted as commander of the rearguard for the whole army. Early in August 1885 he returned to England. He was mentioned in despatches for his part in the campaign and promoted to the rank of Major General. Whilst still in Sudan Wolseley had said that he would have Brackenbury made a General. Writing in his campaign journal Wolseley emphasised that Brackenbury was

...an Excellent Officer and now on the high road to advancement. Indeed unless he be shot in the autumn even the hatred of H.R.H (Duke of Cambridge) cannot keep him back any longer. I shall have him made a Major General whether H.R.H likes it or not.⁸⁶

Wolseley's official despatch mentioned Brackenbury in glowing terms.

It is very desirable to utilise to the full the opportunity which active service affords of gauging the military ability of our officers. Every campaign enables a selection to be made among those who's proved skill in the field and thorough knowledge of their profession mark them out as fitted for higher rank. Brigadier-General Brackenbury, R.A, comes, I consider, prominently under this category, and, in the interests of the army and the state, I would strongly recommend him to your favourable consideration. When Major General Earle was killed at Kirbeka, Brigadier-General Brackenbury assumed command of the Nile Column, and led its advance towards Abu-Hamed. In this, and throughout the operations in the Soudan, he proved himself to be one of the ablest officers in Her Majesty's Army, and he would be a most valuable addition to our present list of General Officers.⁸⁷

The list of promotions and awards for the campaign included, "For distinguished service in the Field: Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel Henry Brackenbury C.B, Royal Artillery to be Major General".⁸⁸ The original draft of the despatch had been even stronger in its recommendation for Brackenbury's promotion but Wolseley had toned the whole document down somewhat in the second draft obviously conscious of objections from the Commander-in-Chief and accusations of favouritism within the 'ring'. There is a question as to how much Wolseley's drive for Brackenbury's promotion was down to his performance in the field and how much it had to do with Wolseley's feeling that he had 'lost' other more senior members of the 'ring'. He had fallen out with Wood before the campaign in the Sudan, and his opinion of him deteriorated during the campaign.⁸⁹ He had already started to find Buller impossible to work with. In fact Wolseley had written to his wife on 22nd of December 1884 that if he was to have a field command again he would want Brackenbury as his Chief of Staff.⁹⁰ As it happened the Sudan was the last time either man went on active service, and Brackenbury never got the opportunity to prove himself in this position. So at the

age of forty-eight his field service career was over. It had been an interesting and varied career covering twelve years. Not only had he shown himself to be the most able administrator in the Army, who knew the importance of careful planning for a campaign, he had also proved he could fight. He proved his courage, which it appears he felt he needed to, in leading a number of charges against the enemy in various campaigns. Perhaps most importantly he proved that he could handle a large body of men. The advance of the River Column was as good as it could have been given the circumstances and the necessity of the retreat was out of his hands. Brackenbury had done all he could. Although he never said it there was undoubtedly a great deal of regret that he did not get the chance to command again, as evidenced by the fact that he continually kept himself ready for appointment during the war scares of the 1880s and 1890s. Given that at forty-eight, he could be considered quite young to be a general when he returned from the Sudan, he could have legitimately hoped to see further service. The problem was that few others recognised in him the talents that Wolseley saw and so the end of Wolseley's active service career spelt the end of Brackenbury's. It was now that Brackenbury got the chance he had wanted: to undertake staff appointments at the highest level. His greatest achievements were still to come.

Notes

¹ For more detail on the Ashanti Ring and the men who made it, see Maxwell, Leigh *The Ashanti Ring* (London: Leo Cooper, 1985) and Harvie, Ian 'The Wolseley Ring: A Case Study in the Exercise of Patronage in The Late Victorian Army', M.A Thesis, Buckingham University, 1993.

² A Detailed account of the history of the Ashanti land and the build up to the war can be found in Brackenbury, Henry *The Ashanti War of 1873-74* Volume I & II (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1874). A simpler version of events can be found in Maxwell, Leigh *The Ashanti Ring* (London: Leo Cooper, 1985). Wolseley's handwritten campaign journals still exist in WO147/3 & WO147/4 at the National Archives, Kew.

³ It has been stated that the situation would have been much worse had it not been for the excellent work of Dr A.D. Home.

⁴ Farwell, Byron *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), p.191.

⁵ Maxwell, Leigh *The Ashanti Ring*, Chapter 4.

-
- ⁶ This statement is attributed to Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Augustus Anson V.C, who at the time was M.P for Bewdley.
- ⁷ These papers were later published by Blackwood's. Brackenbury, Henry & Huyshe, George Lightfoot *Fanti and Ashanti: Three papers read on board the S.S. Ambriz on the voyage to the Gold Coast* (London: William Blackwood, 1873).
- ⁸ The whole story is told in Brackenbury, Henry *Some memories of my Spare Time* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909)), pp.223-224.
- ⁹ Lehmann, Joseph. H *All Sir Garnet: A Life of Field Marshal Lord Wolseley* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1964), p.167.
- ¹⁰ Lehmann, Joseph. H *All Sir Garnet: A Life of Field Marshal Lord Wolseley*, p.87.
- ¹¹ Lehmann, Joseph, H *All Sir Garnet: A Life of Field Marshall Lord Wolseley*, p.191.
- ¹² Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.232-235. The Blackwood Papers at the National Library of Scotland show that he was paid £300 for this book. Brackenbury to Blackwood 27th November 1874, Blackwood Papers, National Library of Scotland, MSS, MS 4315.
- ¹³ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.235.
- ¹⁴ Brackenbury, Henry *Some memories of My Spare Time*, pp.235-236.
- ¹⁵ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.236.
- ¹⁶ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.237-238.
- ¹⁷ According to Wolseley, Brackenbury, a married man, was involved in a rather passionate affair whilst in Natal. What made the position even more delicate was that it was alleged to be with the wife of Theodolphus Shepstone Jnr. He was a distinguished politician and volunteer soldier, whose father was the unofficial leader of Natal. What worried Wolseley was that he was said to be an extremely jealous man and a 'crack shot'. Wolseley resolved to get Brackenbury away from temptation as soon as possible.
- ¹⁸ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.242-243.
- ¹⁹ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.263.
- ²⁰ Brackenbury, Henry 'Crete' *Blackwood's Magazine*, Volume 121 (April 1877), pp.428-455.
- ²¹ An excellent account of this period is found in Cavendish, Anne *Cyprus 1878: The Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley* (Nicosia: Cultural Centre of the Cyprus Popular Bank, 1991). This is an edited version of his journal, which unfortunately has never, to the best of my knowledge, been published in the U.K. However a copy is held, along with the Wolseley papers, at the Central Library Hove. The original journal survives at the National Archives at Kew WO147/6. See also Preston, Adrian 'Sir Garnet Wolseley and the Cyprus Expedition 1878' *The Journal of The Society for Army Historical Research*, Volume XLV (1967).
- ²² It is worth noting that had it come to war with Russia the plan was for Wolseley to be second in command of the expeditionary force, with the veteran general Robert Napier, by now Baron Napier of Magdala. This combination was planned to work so that the younger man, Wolseley, would be the main field commander acting under Napier's overall direction. This would have placed Brackenbury at the very heart of the conflict, as he was designated Quartermaster General of the force to be sent to Constantinople.
- ²³ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.265-266. & Cavendish, Anne *Cyprus 1878*, pp.116-117.
- ²⁴ Brackenbury complained that the lack of society left him living like a monk. Wolseley felt this was a pleasant change from his time in Natal.
- ²⁵ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.267.
- ²⁶ Farwell, Byron *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, p.228.
- ²⁷ Lehmann, Joseph. H *All Sir Garnet*, p.246.
- ²⁸ Lord Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 7th November 1879, Wolseley Papers, Central Library Hove.
- ²⁹ Wolseley's Zulu War Campaign Journal, National Archives WO147/7.
- ³⁰ Brackenbury, Henry 'The Transvaal twenty years ago' *Blackwood's Magazine*, Volume 166 (November 1899), pp.731-752
- ³¹ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.51.
- ³² Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.51-52.
- ³³ His friend was the future Lord Egerton of Taplow, who at the time was M.P for Mid-Cheshire.
- ³⁴ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories pf My Spare Time*, p.285.
- ³⁵ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.286.
- ³⁶ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.309.
- ³⁷ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.288-290.
- ³⁸ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.290.

-
- ³⁹ Wolseley, Sir Garnet *A Soldier's Life* (London: Archibald, Constable and Co Ltd, 1903), p.281.
- ⁴⁰ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.293-294.
- ⁴¹ Maurice, Sir Frederick & Arthur, Sir George *The Life of Lord Wolseley* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1924), pp.142.
- ⁴² Jackson, Patrick *The Last of the Whigs: A Political Biography of Lord Hartington* (Cranbury New Jersey Associated University Presses, 1994).
- ⁴³ There are several books and articles on the fall out from the Phoenix Park Murders. The most recent is Senan, Moloney *The Phoenix Park Murders: Conspiracy, Betrayal and Retribution* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2006). Due to the recent nature of the publication, and also the fact that it was not published in the U.K, I have been unable to obtain a copy and so whether or not this adds anything new to the debate is unclear at the time of writing. See also Corfe, Tom 'The Phoenix Park Murders' *History Today*, 11(12) (1961), pp.828-835 & *The Phoenix Park Murders: Conflict, Compromise and Tragedy in Ireland 1879-1882* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968). McEldowney, John, 'Miscarriages of Justice? The Phoenix Park Murders 1882' *Journal of Criminal Justice History* 14 (1993), pp.143-149. Cooke, A.B. & Vincent, J.R. 'Lord Spencer and the Phoenix Park Murders' *Journal of Irish Historical Studies*, 18 (72) (1973), pp.583-591. However the best accounts of the intelligence/secret service and police response to the murders and the aftermath remains K.R.M Short's 'The Dynamite War'.
- ⁴⁴ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of my Spare Time*, p.311.
- ⁴⁵ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of my Spare Time*, pp.311-312.
- ⁴⁶ Brackenbury to Wolseley 13th May 1882, Wolseley Papers, Central Library Hove.
- ⁴⁷ Brackenbury to Wolseley 13th May 1882, Wolseley Papers Central Library Hove & Short, K.R.M *The Dynamite War; Irish-American Bombers in Victorian Britain* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979), pp.79-81.
- ⁴⁸ Spencer to Gladstone, 9th May 1882. Gladstone Papers, British Library Add 44308/234.
- ⁴⁹ A good account of all the political events and the reorganisation of the police forces can be found in Short, K.R.M *The Dynamite War* Chapter 3 in particular.
- ⁵⁰ Brackenbury to Lord Spencer, 31st May 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088. Pp1.
- ⁵¹ Brackenbury to Lord Spencer, 31st May 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088. Pp1.
- ⁵² Brackenbury to Lord Spencer, 31st May 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088. Pp2.
- ⁵³ Brackenbury to Lord Spencer, 31st May 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088. Pp5.
- ⁵⁴ Short, K.R.M *The Dynamite War*. Chapter three, about Brackenbury's time in Ireland, is entitled 'Spymaster-general'. On Pp81 he refers to Brackenbury's appointment saying, "Ireland had its first 'spymaster-general'".
- ⁵⁵ Brackenbury to Lord Spencer 16th June 1882, British Library Add77088
- ⁵⁶ Lord Spencer to W.E. Gladstone 7th June 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088
- ⁵⁷ Brackenbury recorded in a letter to Wolseley that, "There is rather a panic here. The Permanent Secretary carries a loaded revolver in his dispatch box!". Brackenbury compared the situation with that of Lord Chelmsford after Isandlwana, saying it was a case of "shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted". Brackenbury to Wolseley 13th May 1882, Wolseley Papers, Central Library Hove.
- ⁵⁸ Brackenbury to Lord Spencer, 31st May 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088, p.6.
- ⁵⁹ Brackenbury to Lord Spencer, 14th July 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088, p.6.
- ⁶⁰ Brackenbury to Boyle, 18th July 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088.
- ⁶¹ Brackenbury to Boyle, 17th July 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088.
- ⁶² Short, K.R.M *The Dynamite War*, p.87.
- ⁶³ W.E. Gladstone to Lord Spencer, 14th June 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088.
- ⁶⁴ Brackenbury to Spencer, 14th July 1882, Spencer Papers, British Library Add77088.
- ⁶⁵ Brackenbury's remarks were written in the context of expressing that in the administration of the Army he felt most comfortable and useful. Brackenbury to Wolseley, 4th February 1883, Wolseley Papers, Central Library Hove.
- ⁶⁶ Lord Spencer to W.E. Gladstone 2nd July 1882 Gladstone Papers British Library Add 44309/74
- ⁶⁷ Brackenbury to Wolseley 13th May 1882 Wolseley Papers, Central Library Hove.
- ⁶⁸ Brackenbury to Wolseley 16th May 1882 Wolseley Papers, Central Library Hove.
- ⁶⁹ This was not the last time that Ireland would come up in his career. In August 1886, just after he had entered the Intelligence Branch, Brackenbury was asked by the new Secretary of state for War, W.H. Smith to once again go to Ireland this time as Special Commissioner for Police and Intelligence. Brackenbury was obviously reluctant, but there must have been part of him that was tempted to return, as W.H. Smith was offering him the tools to do the job. However he refused and Redvers Buller was sent in his place. See Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.352-353.
- ⁷⁰ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.313-314.

-
- ⁷¹ Short, K.R.M *The Dynamite War*, p.87.
- ⁷² Brackenbury to T.H Escott, 6th September 1885, Escott Papers, British Library Add58775
- ⁷³ Brackenbury to T.H Escott, 22nd July 1883, Escott Papers, British Library Add58775
- ⁷⁴ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.314.
- ⁷⁵ Brackenbury to T.H Escott, 28th April 1883, Escott Papers, British Library Add58775
- ⁷⁶ Valentine Baker had been convicted of indecent assault, but cleared of rape, upon Miss Rebecca Dickinson in a railway carriage between Woking and Esher. He was fined £500 and imprisoned for a year. There were many holes in Miss Dickinson's story which were never exposed as Baker's sense of 'honour' meant that he refused to put his side of the story and would not allow his barrister to cross examine Miss Dickinson.
- ⁷⁷ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.334-335.
- ⁷⁸ Lord Wolseley Campaign Journal for the Sudan 22nd August 1884 to 13 July 1885, National Archives WO147/8.
- ⁷⁹ Preston, Adrian *In Relief of Gordon: Lord Wolseley's Campaign Journal of the Khartoum Relief Expedition 1884-1885* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1967), p.61.
- ⁸⁰ It is worth remembering that at this point the British organised and led Egyptian Army was designed for use purely within Egypt. Therefore the Egyptian Army massacred in the Sudan had been especially raised for that purpose.
- ⁸¹ Kochanski, Halik *Sir Garnet Wolseley Victorian Hero* (London: Hambledon Press, 1999), pp.170.
- ⁸² This officer was Capt, later Major-General, Lord Edward Von Gleichen. Gleichen was convinced that it was this incident that led Brackenbury to form a high opinion of him and later arrange his appoint to serve under him at the Intelligence Branch. Gleichen, Edward *A Guardsman's Memories* (London: William Blackwood, 1932), p.140.
- ⁸³ Brackenbury, Henry *The River Column* (Nashville: The Battery Press, 1993), pp.169-170. First published in 1885 by Blackwood's, London.
- ⁸⁴ Lord Wolseley to Lady Wolseley, 20th January 1885, Wolseley Papers, Central Library Hove.
- ⁸⁵ The source of much of this criticism came from Lt Col, later General Sir, Ian Hamilton who was part of the River Column. It is his views that are repeated by many historians in criticism. Hamilton had a strange relationship with Brackenbury. They were friends but Hamilton would often criticise Brackenbury as a way of attacking Wolseley who he detested. However the suggestion by Julian Symonds that Brackenbury, like Charles Wilson, was responsible for the death of Gordon because neither were experienced combat soldiers, both being primarily administrators, is extremely unfair. These comments not only show ignorance of Brackenbury's career, but also ignore the fact that Brackenbury did not take over command of the column until 10th February. Gordon was killed, and Khartoum fell, on 26th January.
- ⁸⁶ Lord Wolseley's Campaign Journal for the Sudan 22nd August 1884 to 13th July 1885, National Archives WO147/8.
- ⁸⁷ Lord Wolseley's Sudan Campaign Despatch, 'Supplement to The London Gazette of Tuesday the 25th of August 1885', National Archives, WO32/6136.
- ⁸⁸ Lord Wolseley's Sudan Campaign Despatch, 'Supplement to The London Gazette of Tuesday the 25th of August 1885', National Archives, WO32/6136. Brackenbury was only a Lieutenant Colonel in his Regiment, the Royal Artillery, but was a Colonel in the army as a whole. Thus the two ranks.
- ⁸⁹ Wolseley blamed Wood for signing the peace treaty with the Boers in 1881 after the Battle of Majuba Hill, in which Wolseley's favourite member of the 'ring' Sir George Colley was killed. This was despite the fact that Wood was following a direct order from the Government. Wolseley believed he should have resigned rather than sign such a treaty.
- ⁹⁰ Lord Wolseley to Lady Wolseley 22nd December 1884, Wolseley Papers, Central Library Hove. It is interesting to note that this is before Brackenbury had 'distinguished himself in the field' on this campaign.

The Intelligence Branch Under Sir Henry Brackenbury

Introduction

The Intelligence Branch of the War Office was a fairly new organisation, having been formally established in 1873. Yet by 1885 it had reached its lowest ebb and could with some justification be said to have virtually ceased to exist. Whilst the office and administration was still there most of the section heads, including the head of the branch itself, had moved away. In a bizarre example of military 'logic', the head of the branch, Major-General Sir Archibald Allison, was sent on active service in Egypt in 1882 and remained there for three years. Whilst slightly unusual it would have been understandable if he had been placed in charge of intelligence for the army in the field. Yet his appointments were as military governor of Alexandria and Commander of the Highland Brigade. So whilst the senior officer for intelligence in the British Army was "living in a tent in Egypt", he had only limited contact with intelligence, even though he was still charged with gathering and presenting intelligence to the senior commanders of the army and the cabinet.¹ This meant the deputy of the Intelligence Branch controlled the branch during this period: firstly Colonel East, then Colonel Cameron. Both men tried their best but were hampered by the same practice that had taken their head away. During the Gordon Relief Expedition four of the six section heads at the Intelligence Branch were away on active service.² Added to the head of the branch being away, it is not surprising that by the end of the war the branch was in serious trouble. To say the branch had collapsed would be unfair. That would suggest that it had been unable to cope with the demands of war, which was simply not the case. Under the difficult situation the intelligence necessary had continued to be produced. What had happened was that the branch had been considerably weakened at the point at which it would, in a larger

conflict, need to be at its strongest. The war in the Sudan further highlighted the administrative and staff problems that were rife in the branch, and it could be argued, the army in general.

Brackenbury was undoubtedly chosen because of his proven administrative ability but the appointment owed something to the intervention of Lord Wolseley, by now Adjutant-General. Sir Frederick Maurice and Sir George Arthur support this view in their biography of Lord Wolseley by giving him credit for Brackenbury's appointment.³ Yet whilst patronage had undoubtedly played a significant part in getting him the position, there was little doubt that he was capable and perhaps one of the best-qualified men in the British Army for the position. He was also fresh from a successful spell in charge of the River Column in the Sudan. Although there was to be criticism of some of his decisions in later years, at that time his star was most certainly in the ascendant. The degree to which he was suited for the post was best answered by Thomas G Fergusson, who wrote that:

In addition to his considerable talents as an administrator, staff officer, and writer, he was not without experience in military intelligence. Most notably, Brackenbury had served as military attaché in Paris in 1881-82 and so played a vital role in the collection of strategic intelligence on the armed forces of France.⁴

He goes on to stress the importance of Brackenbury's service in colonial campaigns, his first hand witnessing of the Franco-Prussian War, and his 'educational' career both in his writing and his previous spell as teacher at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. It was usual practice for the head of the department to have served in it previously at some point in his career. The fact that Brackenbury had not was perhaps an advantage. He was not set in the ways of the Intelligence Branch, which gave him the freedom to undertake the necessary reform. The branch had got into a bad way, and perhaps needed a new 'broom' to sweep away the old ideas. However, at the

same time it could not be said that Brackenbury was in any way unqualified or unsuited for the position. This chapter will look at how Brackenbury took a branch that had virtually ceased to exist and turned it into an important part of the War Office machine that gained much praise from soldiers and civilians alike.⁵ Although his time during the South African War, which will be looked at later, was of great importance, Brackenbury would probably have considered his time at the Intelligence Branch to be his greatest period of achievement.

Background to the Intelligence Branch

The Intelligence Branch had its roots in the Topographical Branch of the Quartermaster-General's Department.⁶ The Topographical Branch had been created as a response to the lessons of the Crimean War where a lack of maps and knowledge of the area caused extensive problems for the British Army. The lessons of another war, although this time one in which the British took no part, led to the decision by Secretary of State for War Cardwell to expand the Topographical Branch into the Intelligence Branch.⁷ The Franco-Prussian War had highlighted that the War Office lacked any detailed knowledge of either the French or Prussian armies and that because of its small size and limited resources there were not even any satisfactory military maps of either country. As a result, on the 24th February 1873, the Intelligence Branch of the War Office was formally created with Major-General Sir Patrick MacDougall as its first head. The branch grew in both size and importance under him, largely due to the presence of political will that Prussian victories had created. In 1878 MacDougall left to take up command in Canada and Major-General Sir Archibald Allison replaced him. The branch lost direction under Allison, largely due to the fact that by now the 'panics', which both the Crimean and Franco-

Prussian War had created, had lost their political impetus. Moreover there was the continued practice of sending officers from the branch on active service, and at the height of the Sudan expedition four out of the six Major's in the branch were on active service along with Allison himself. This could perhaps have been excused if the officers were taken on active service to perform intelligence duties, but even this was not the case. Most simply performed their regimental duties. This would continue to be a problem until sufficient funding for the department allowed more officers to be permanently on the establishment.

Brackenbury's arrival at the Intelligence Branch

One of the biggest problems facing Brackenbury was that many of the officers serving at the Intelligence Branch were only 'attached'. This meant that the majority of them were still expected to carry out their regimental duties along side their intelligence work. A good example of this is found in the experiences of the then Captain Edward Gleichen.⁸ As an officer in the Grenadier Guards he was still expected to carry out his duties in that capacity along side his work at the Intelligence Branch. This included every fourth night being on guard duty at the Bank of England. This continued for eighteen months, until his Regiment went to Ireland. As Parritt states when writing of Gleichen, "One wonders how staff officers in the Ministry of Defence today, would react to doing regimental guard duties every fourth night!".⁹

Brackenbury immediately identified this as a major problem. He needed a permanent and established staff if he was to enable it to produce the volume and quality of material that was needed. The whole operation was at present conducted in a very unprofessional way and Brackenbury intended to turn the branch into a professional

organisation, therefore the situation had to change. The point was further illustrated in the early days of his tenure, when three officers of the Royal Artillery attached to the branch were recalled to their regiment on the same day.¹⁰ It would be difficult for him to continue at the same level with three senior officers absent. Of further concern was the fact that this was happening in peacetime. The branch knew only too well from recent experience that if a major campaign was launched all the attached officers would likely be required by their Regiments. The branch would be denuded of officers at the very time it needed them most. Brackenbury's argument succeeded, despite Treasury opposition. In October 1887 the branch was increased to a strength of seven staff captains, six of whom were serving long terms at the branch. This was achieved by the transfer of the branch back to the Adjutant General's Department on 1st June 1887.¹¹ It had originally been in the Adjutant General's Department, but in 1874 had been transferred to the Quarter-Master General's Department. The transfer back brought more prestige to the branch, as the Adjutant-General's Department was seen as the real hub of the War Office due to it being much larger than the Quarter-Master General's Department and the fact that the Adjutant General was seen as the deputy to the Commander-in-Chief. At the same time Brackenbury was given the authority to report straight to the Commander-in-Chief and the relevant members of the cabinet, without having to go through laborious official channels.¹²

His other immediate decision was to set up a 'Ways and Means Committee' which was unusual in the fact that it only had two members, Brackenbury and the Permanent Under Secretary at the War Office, Sir Ralph Thompson. Brackenbury's aim was to obtain a complete picture of how the branch operated and what it was required for. This meant that when the results were known he was able to undertake a full and

thorough reform of the branch and not be just "... 'tinkering' with the organisation rather than making any radical improvement".¹³ This investigation led Brackenbury to the conclusion that the most likely threat came from an aggressive European power, possibly leading to invasion. He wanted to make the branch use the intelligence it had gathered to prepare the Army to meet these perceived threats. He therefore began a process of considering and planning for the mobilisation of the army in time of war.

Although the invasion scares that occurred periodically throughout the late nineteenth century might seem rather fanciful and were often fuelled by works of fiction such as 'The Battle of Dorking', they were taken extremely seriously at the time by both military and civilians alike. Large-scale fortifications and coastal defences were being built and enhanced. Brackenbury, however, rather than merely responding to public concern believed strongly that the possibility of invasion existed. A continuing fear that he expressed throughout much of his career was the possibility of a Franco-Russian alliance that was hostile towards Britain.¹⁴ Britain had clashed with Russia over their intervention in Afghanistan, and the fear of a Russian invasion of India, no matter how unlikely that event actually was, continued to be a constant anxiety expressed in the press and wider literature. In 1885 there had been tension between the two nations during the Bulgarian crisis and the Royal Navy and the army had been readied for war. There was also continual tension with France around the world regarding trade, the most recent example of which concerned British operations in Egypt. This, when added to the existence of some rather bellicose French politicians, most notably the War Minister General Boulanger, meant that the possibility of invasion could not be ignored. Whilst believing that such an invasion would be unsuccessful, he feared it would be used as a gambit to hold British forces in India in check whilst France attacked the British Isles. There was some logic to this in the fact

that in the aforementioned Bulgarian crisis it was largely the Indian Army that had been moved into position to reply to Russian aggression. If all British and Indian troops had to be kept in India it would rob Britain of a very large part of its trained manpower. This view was supported by the intelligence gathered by his department that found that plans for an invasion of India by Russia did exist.¹⁵ It was also known that the proposed commander of such a force would be the highly regarded General Kuropatkin, a general in his late thirties who had created quite a reputation in command of the Russian conquest of Central Asia.¹⁶ Brackenbury's fear was that he would keep British forces tied down to the extent that the already thinly spread British Army would be unable to gather sufficient strength in Britain to repel any possible invasion. This was also based on the assumption, supported by Lord Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief in India, that the large majority of the Indian Army would be unable to match the Russian forces. It was therefore being argued that rather than taking troops from India in the event of war with Russia, extra British troops may well be needed there to deal with any such threat.¹⁷

The obvious reply to this was the strength of the Royal Navy, but it must be remembered that France and Russia had the next two biggest fleets and that eighty years of unchallenged British naval supremacy had led to complacency within the service. Questions were being asked about the real strength of the Royal Navy, given that many of its ships could be regarded as obsolescent. The debate concerning the Royal Navy was widened by W.T Stead's series of articles 'What is the Truth about the Navy?', written in 1884, which commented on the large shipbuilding programme of the French Navy and suggested that it had nearly reached parity with the Royal Navy as a result.¹⁸ It was the strength of this argument and the debate that it caused that once again raised the question of invasion and the plans for dealing with

such an event. It was with this in mind that the continuing question of the need for fixed mobilisation plans resurfaced.

Mobilisation plans

The idea that the drawing up of mobilisation plans was the responsibility of the Intelligence Branch might seem rather anachronistic to the modern reader. It was perhaps slightly unusual but it must be remembered that at this time the British Army lacked any form of General Staff. This presented a major problem as there existed no body of soldiers able to prepare and plan schemes for the future that was devoid of any other organisational and administrative duties. There were many within the Army who saw the Intelligence Branch as the organisation best placed to fill this void.

Brackenbury was amongst this number - in fact as a member of the Hartington Commission he was to press the case for the creation of a General Staff - but the Hartington Commission will be looked at in more detail later. Whilst the Intelligence Branch was able to undertake these duties in the absence of a General Staff this was on top of their already quite considerable workload. It was therefore not just a problem of who would do the work, but also what amount of time could be devoted to it. No body existed that could concentrate on this and this alone as a continental General Staff could.

One of the duties that Brackenbury was charged with was the “preparation and maintenance of information relative to the defence of the Empire and mobilisation of the Army”.¹⁹ Brackenbury found it difficult to make such preparations without any form of mobilisation scheme being in place. He therefore decided to undertake the planning of mobilisation. The problem was what operations was he planning to mobilise the army for? There were no fixed duties for the British army. As we have

seen, it spent most its time engaged in colonial campaigning. It was becoming likely that there may well be a need for the Army to fight a European foe either on the continent or in repelling an invasion of the British Isles or the Empire. Brackenbury resurrected Wolseley's demands for the formal setting out of the duties, which the army was expected to undertake.²⁰ The added pressure was enough and the Stanhope Memorandum, whilst semi-unofficial in nature, clarified the situation. However this was not officially arrived at until December 1888. In the mean-time Brackenbury had been advised to plan mobilisation on the basis of two army corps for service at home, and two army corps for possible service overseas. The basic instructions that Brackenbury received from the War Office were that he was to organise a scheme for the mobilisation of one army corps, with line of communication troops, for service outside of Britain and Ireland. He was also to produce a scheme along similar lines for the mobilisation of two army corps for service outside Britain and Ireland. Finally, he was to produce a scheme for the mobilisation of "all forces of the Crown", so as to dispatch two army corps overseas and mobilise the rest for the defence of Britain and Ireland and to support the forces overseas.²¹

In a memorandum to Arthur Herbert, the Quarter Master General, and Lord Wolseley, the Adjutant General, Brackenbury set out the dismal picture.²² He had found that whilst there was plenty of infantry and cavalry for two, and even four, army corps there was a severe lack of support for them. In terms of the commissariat, transport, and medical staff, the Ordnance Store Department, and the Veterinary Corps there were insufficient men available at home for the mobilisation of even one army corps. He also found that to mobilise one corps 8,000 horses would have to be purchased. If that were not bad enough he found that for a second army corps 800 extra men were

needed for the artillery alone and even this was after exhausting the depot batteries, the riding troop, and the army and militia reserve. Moreover, the second corps would be completely without commissariat, transport or medical support. He did suggest that by using the militia and volunteers there might be sufficient Veterinary and Ordnance Department support, but of course these men could not be used outside the British Isles. In addition 11,000 further horses would have to be bought for a second army corps.

The situation looked bad, but as Brackenbury pointed out it was in fact even worse than it looked.

Yet this is after withdrawing from every part of the United Kingdom every field gun, every field engineer, and Commissariat and Transport man over one years service; and after withdrawing from the hospitals every medical officer and trained man of the Medical Staff Corps.²³

In effect there would be plenty of fighting men of the infantry and cavalry left in the British Isles, but there would be no support for the movement of such a force. They would therefore be largely confined to defending and operating close to their fortresses which, as Brackenbury had seen in the Franco-Prussian War, could prove disastrous. There is a very pertinent point to make from the fact that there were sufficient fighting men but insufficient support services. It illustrates the lack of understanding and appreciation that existed within the army and government of the importance of such things. In the same way that the administrative skills of Brackenbury were largely ignored, so was the vital work of support services that enabled the troops to take the field fully equipped and supplied, and cared for their needs after the battle. Brackenbury placed the blame for this squarely on civilian government, who were not cognisant of the fact that battles and wars were not won by holding defensive positions alone and that there was more to the make-up of an army

than infantry, cavalry and artillery. An army's "... very existence depends upon it containing a due proportion of the three arms, and being complete in those auxiliary services, without which neither infantry, cavalry, nor artillery, can live, march, or fight". As a result of this lack of support troops, Brackenbury wrote, "It is useless to attempt to carry out my instructions beyond the point to which troops are available".²⁴ This was an understandable soldier's response but ignored the fact that many soldiers were equally unappreciative of this work. If nothing else this lent weight to Brackenbury's argument for a General Staff who, being responsible for planning, would do their best to make such forces available.

Brackenbury would have been forgiven for abandoning the exercise there and then, as others had done in the past, but he believed deeply that the country needed to prepare itself better for the prospect of war. Brackenbury would have been as well informed as any man of the dangers that were facing the country and the Empire at that time. There was considered to be a very real danger of a major continental war and possible invasion of the British Isles. Whilst the possibility of invasion is open to question, the situation was potentially full of peril. If Britain was unable to place even two army corps in the field there was a serious threat. To put the lack of even two army corps into a continental context, Brackenbury also published in his report the number of army corps "exclusive of garrisons and troops of the second line, the principal continental nations can place in the field complete in every detail, immediately after the order of mobilisation has been given".²⁵ Whilst this showed the obvious superiority of France, and Germany, being able to place nineteen, and eighteen army corps in the field respectively, and that Russia could place seventeen and a half in the field in Europe, it also highlighted Britain's position behind even the lesser of the great powers. The Austro-Hungarian Empire could place thirteen army

corps in the field, the Italians twelve, and most embarrassing of all Belgium could place two army corps in the field. The figures are perhaps slightly misleading, as the other great powers had some form of compulsory service and all had land borders needing protection. Britain's lack of any land frontiers, the absence of conscription and the supposed superiority of the Royal Navy, always made her vulnerable to complacency regarding the size of army it required. Yet this did not change the fact that the state of affairs should have been of great concern. Brackenbury's language got quite extreme. It could be argued that there was even a veiled threat, though more probably a warning, towards the government. He wrote about his experiences in the Franco-Prussian war, and the consequences that were visited upon the French government for failure to have sufficiently prepared the Army for it.

Then a great nation turned and rent those who had governed it, and whom it rightly and justly accused of having deceived it as to the state of its army, and, by their neglect to make the army an efficient weapon, betrayed the trust that the nation had placed in their hands.

Brackenbury could in no way be called an alarmist, nor did he really have a significant personal agenda, any more than a member of the armed forces has ever had. The final paragraph in his report underlined the point.

If now I venture to press this matter in stronger language than is customary in official documents, it is because I am convinced that to leave our Army in its present state is to court national disaster, and because I have seen with my own eyes what such national disaster bring in its train.²⁶

The work of mobilisation planning continued but Brackenbury felt that it was becoming too much of a strain on his staff. Despite the deficiencies he produced a mobilisation plan in three parts in December 1886.²⁷ This formed the basis of the mobilisation scheme, which was to work so successfully, much to the surprise of the War Office, during the South African War. Problems only occurred, like so much

concerning the South African War, after the numbers got beyond that which anyone within the army had ever anticipated. The main problem was how to make the despatch of two army corps a reality, and this had to be sorted out with the civilian side of the War Office. This would take too much of his and his staff's time at the expense of their real purpose of gathering and collating intelligence. In November 1887 a separate mobilisation section was formed at Brackenbury's request so as to free the Intelligence Branch to concentrate on its primary duties. Brackenbury argued for this by stating that since his arrival the post of Assistant Adjutant General had been vacant.²⁸ This position was the de facto deputy to the head of the Intelligence Branch, and because of his desire to be more hands on he had not filled the vacancy. He argued that he was not asking for an addition to his staff but filling an already vacant post, albeit with slightly different responsibilities. On the 15th August 1887 Brackenbury wrote to Colonel John Ardagh asking if he would accept the position, stating that whilst official approval was still waiting he had the support of both Wolseley and Sir Ralph Thomson, the Permanent Under Secretary for the War Office.²⁹ Ardagh had previously worked in the Intelligence Branch and his administrative skills had been demonstrated on active service in Egypt and the Sudan, where Brackenbury had established a high opinion of him.³⁰ Although not one of the Wolseley 'ring' he was highly thought of by the great man and in the years that followed their service in the Sudan together a great deal of private correspondence passed between Wolseley and Ardagh. On the 13th October 1887 Brackenbury wrote confirming that official sanction had been given for his appointment and asking him to do all he could to return with speed from Egypt.

The more I think the matter over, the more I feel that although we have, in our mobilisation scheme, laid the foundation of a great national work, we have only laid the foundations and that the whole super-structure has got to be built.³¹

He also confirmed that Ardagh would be his deputy and replace him in his absence.

With this appointment the detail of the scheme began to be put in place. By early 1888 the mobilisation section became independent of the Intelligence Branch, and the branch was able to concentrate fully on its main task.

Producing Intelligence

A conversation Brackenbury had with the future Major-General Sir Charles Callwell, when the latter was a staff captain in the Intelligence Branch, sums up Brackenbury's views on the way in which he perceived the operation of the branch. Callwell records the conversation as follows:

I shan't expect you to be able to answer every question that may arise in respect to your particular work, right off the reel; I shan't even expect the information necessarily to be actually available in the department. But I shall expect you not to be helpless, but to find means of getting that information somehow within a reasonable time. If you keep your wits about you, if you look ahead, if, whenever anything crops up that you do not know all about you set yourself to find out all about it, if you keep sucking in information into the place and if you see that the information you suck into the place is properly registered and so made available when required, your particular section will in course of time become a real going concern.³²

This is a perfect example of Brackenbury's professional and business approach to his military work. Added to that, this statement clearly highlights that he knew his department's limitations, due largely to finance, and was not expecting miracles from his officers, but to perform in an equally professional and business like-manner. This concept of constantly 'sucking' in information was to prove its worth. As a consequence it amassed a series of archives of military intelligence.³³ The other key aspect he brought to the positions was an insistence on getting the right officers for the branch. This was illustrated some years later when he was advising on the establishment of the Indian Army's Intelligence Branch. In a letter to Roberts he

advised, “So much depends upon getting the very best men for the Intelligence Department”.³⁴

One of the best sources of information about Brackenbury’s time and achievements as Head of the Intelligence Branch, and the way in which he worked, is to be found in the biographies, memoirs and autobiographies of those who served under him.

Callwell has already been mentioned. Another of these was Captain, later Lieutenant-General Sir James Grierson, who was given command of II Corps of the British

Expeditionary Force (B.E.F) in 1914.³⁵ Grierson and Brackenbury were very much

alike. They were both intellectual soldiers, or as Grierson’s biographer put it, they

were, “scientific soldiers in the dawn of scientific soldiering”.³⁶ They were both able

to combine active service with administrative appointments, for which their

intellectual capabilities suited them. Grierson admired Brackenbury’s ability and saw

him as proof that officers of their unusual abilities could be successful. It appears that

Grierson was even more committed to his work than Brackenbury, who once

commented that, “I always thought I was a hard worker, but you quite put me to

shame”.³⁷ One of the keys to Brackenbury’s success in building up the branch was

the fact that he obtained the appointment of several good workers. Their, and his,

sheer industry made it possible for him to achieve much with a relatively small staff.

This seems to have been something that Brackenbury demanded from his staff.

Mention has already been made of Gleichen who combined his work at the

Intelligence Branch with regimental duties. Many of his other officers were men of equal drive and determination. It is worth considering the subsequent careers of some

of those who served under Brackenbury during this period. Two of them, Sir Henry

Wilson and Sir William Robertson, reached the rank of Field Marshal. Sir James

Wolfe Murray was Chief of the Imperial General Staff for a period during World War

One. Five of them, Aston, Callwell, Dalton, Trotter and Gleichen attained the rank of Major General. It is also worth noting the background of those who served in the Intelligence Branch. When Callwell entered in 1887 he brought the total number of Staff College graduates to thirteen.³⁸ It will be remembered that Brackenbury himself never attended the Staff College, so rather than being seen as championing the cause of the Staff College it was more to do with the practicalities of the situation. The absence of a General Staff meant that the obvious destination for the brightest and best of the Staff College graduates was unavailable. In its absence the Intelligence Branch attracted those graduates and in many ways began to take on the appearance of a General Staff. It was certainly the case that during Brackenbury's time in command the overwhelming majority of his officers were graduates of the Staff College.

Brackenbury seems to have developed a good relationship with those who worked under him. They were full of respect and praise for him; he also seems to have developed good personal relationships with those under his command, which goes against the 'unfriendly' and 'loner' image that Wolseley suggested. According to Callwell he made it a point to get to know his staff outside of office hours. "Of the many officers who served under 'Brack' in Queen Anne's Gate during the following four years, there was not one who did not simply swear by him nor part with him full of respect for his gifts".³⁹ Gleichen in similar vein also noted that, "We were zealous, and worked hard under the masterful supervision of Brackenbury, whom we both admired and respected".⁴⁰ To a large extent it was a meeting of likeminded soldiers, but it was also the respect they gained through seeing him at work. The amount of material that the branch began to collect was large, and the collation of it a laborious

business. As Callwell recalled, “One could have occupied one’s office chair for twenty-four hours each day and never have been at a loose end for something to be at”.⁴¹

The majority of the intelligence gathered was by overt means. Reports came in from various sources and were added to the information kept on various subjects and countries. Much would come through official publications, newspapers, and translations of foreign military journals. The latter was another reason why Brackenbury encouraged the appointment to the Intelligence Branch of officers who were at the very least bilingual, as they could translate the material themselves, and for which they were paid extra.⁴² Whilst this was hardly sophisticated it meant that large folders of information were established that gave a well-balanced account of the various countries politically, socially and militarily. When added to the small amount of material that was obtained by covert means, it added to quality intelligence reports.

The department was split into six sections.⁴³ Sections A to E dealt with the various areas of the world, but there was also a Topographical Section (F) and a Central Section, charged with the collation, filing and distribution of the reports from the other sections. The Central Section was commanded by the deputy of the Intelligence Branch, but when Brackenbury arrived the post was vacant. It was for this position originally that he sought the services of Colonel Ardagh, who did become deputy, but he was so busy with the mobilisation scheme that the Central Section ceased to exist and the duties were taken over by Brackenbury himself. The shortage of staff, and more importantly money, meant that the size and areas covered by the sections were large. Where possible it was organised on a geographical basis so that section D covered Russia, India, Afghanistan, Burma, Siberia, China, Japan,

Siam, Central Asia and Persia. However, in other sections the geographical element was not so logical with section A covering France, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Portugal but was also responsible for Central and South America and Mexico. Section F was responsible for maps and the library. Brackenbury encouraged his officers to visit, as much as possible, the countries for which they were responsible. For this he was able to wheedle out of the Treasury a travel grant of £600 a year.⁴⁴ Whilst not much it was better than the previous situation whereby officers had to pay their own expenses. Visiting the areas under their surveillance was one obvious way of obtaining information. Whilst some of this was covert, much was gathered by invitation. Foreign manoeuvres were a good place to gain intelligence. Brackenbury issued instructions that:

Officers attending manoeuvres in all foreign countries will find it adds much to the usefulness and pleasure of their visit if they take the trouble to get themselves duly presented to as many of the Officers as possible of the army to which they are sent, especially those of high rank. Two hundred visiting cards should be taken by each officer.⁴⁵

It was also less risky than other means of gathering intelligence, as there was little need for subterfuge. For example, Captain Repington visited the French Army manoeuvres in 1891 by official invitation.⁴⁶ It would be interesting to know whether the French knew that he was head of the section responsible for gathering intelligence on them. It may well be that they saw him merely as an interested fellow soldier. This was certainly the case with Grierson, who was often invited to visit the General Staff in Berlin.⁴⁷ He spoke fluent German and had built up friendships with many German Staff Officers over the years. He used such visits to gather intelligence from them on the Russians, which they had gathered through being prepared to, as Grierson said, “put down the necessary roubles”.⁴⁸ At the same time his easy access to the General Staff, which was freely given, enabled him to gather intelligence on the Germans.

This relationship worked both ways and was openly encouraged by Brackenbury. Indeed, the intelligence gathered by Captain Waters mission to Russia in 1891 was shared with the Germans; in fact his report was read by the chief of the intelligence staff in Germany before Brackenbury saw it.⁴⁹ It must be remembered that this was at a time when Anglo-German relations were still good, and as Brackenbury's intelligence reports show, Russia was considered the most likely enemy, and Germany was seen as a potential ally. Under such circumstances intelligence on Russia was freely exchanged between the Intelligence Branch and its German counterpart on a practical if not official level. Grierson was ideally suited for this, as Brackenbury knew full well, because, as a member of the German General Staff wrote, "Grierson, that excellent comrade, is almost as well known at Berlin as at Woolwich, and the whole General Staff of our Army knows him and highly values and appreciates his thorough knowledge".⁵⁰

Whilst a great deal of intelligence could be gathered like this it failed to provide the detailed knowledge that was sometimes necessary. There was also a limited amount that those in the Intelligence Branch could do themselves. They also took a very great risk, as it was harder for them to deny spying if they were detained and it was discovered they worked at the War Office. The same was true for military attachés, as in many countries they were usually followed. The answer was found in a large number of 'volunteer spies', who undertook missions. Many were soldiers who on leave would visit the continent and gather what they could for the branch, though Brackenbury was reluctant to accept such offers, fearing that it might endanger his more legitimate intelligence gathering and lead to unfortunate clashes with foreign powers. Many were motivated by a desire for adventure and a rather jingoistic type of

patriotism.⁵¹ A leading example of this, and a man whose success convinced Brackenbury of the usefulness of such individuals, was Robert Baden-Powell.⁵² Although a soldier he undertook such missions privately, originally without the knowledge of Brackenbury, and would present his information on his return. He managed to get himself access to the German Army manoeuvres and was thus able to get far closer than official guests to a new German machine gun that was being tested. He also found ingenious ways of smuggling out his information, such as hiding the details of fortifications in detailed drawings of butterfly wings. On another occasion he posed as a painter and in watercolours of Algerian coastal scenes he hid in a code of dots and dashes the position of fixed defences, along with his opinion of the calibre of gun at the naval base at Bizerta.⁵³ Such information was greatly appreciated by Brackenbury.⁵⁴

However not all were as effective as Baden-Powell, and there were those whose incompetence caused problems for the Intelligence Branch. Gleichen tells the story of an officer who when on such a mission was approached by two gendarmes. In a panic he started to try to eat the pages of his notebook, which contained the intelligence he had gathered. He was arrested, and it turned out that the two gendarmes had merely approached him for a light for their cigarettes.⁵⁵ In an attempt to try and avert such embarrassments Brackenbury issued his “Rules to be observed by Officers Travelling who are endeavouring to obtain Information for the Intelligence Division”.⁵⁶ He made it clear that such individuals:

Were not to consider themselves as employed by the Intelligence Division, and are, on no account whatever, to represent themselves to any person as being so employed, or as being engaged on any official work, or as having any official mission, unless they have received especial authority to do so from His Royal Highness, the Commander-in-Chief.⁵⁷

The rest of his rules made it clear to the individuals concerned that they were on their own if they were caught, and that the penalties for being caught could be severe.

Whilst he had his doubts about the motives and competence of many of these volunteers, he did appreciate their efforts. Later, when in India, he recommended to Lord Roberts that a similar course be taken to gather intelligence on Madagascar. Roberts was concerned about their lack of knowledge about French defences and forces in Madagascar, and with some justification as the forces there could have harassed British interests in the Indian Ocean in the event of war. There was a possibility that in the future an operation might need to be mounted from India against it but intelligence was lacking. Brackenbury wrote that:

I should suggest following the plan which I found success with. Let your Intelligence Department do the thing quietly, by leave of absence being given to some officer who speaks French fluently, and is a cool hand. Let him go without any official mission, or any written instructions, but with the verbal information as to the points to be reported on...It is difficult work and dangerous work, but it can be done. No one except Woodthorpe, should know about it. Even you and I should have our hands clean, if any official representations are made by the French government.⁵⁸

Another success was the development of relations with other departments. The Admiralty had established its own Foreign Intelligence Committee only in 1882, with the role of collecting and producing intelligence and coordinating the work of the various naval attaches but it was not until 1887 that this became the Naval Intelligence Department. Like its army counterpart it was small, under-staffed and under-funded. Cooperation between the two was logical but did not occur until Brackenbury's arrival. Partly this was due to the chaos that the Intelligence Branch had been in, but it was also partly due to the parochial views of Brackenbury's predecessors. Brackenbury himself began the system of cooperation and coordination, and was able to build a close working relationship with his naval counterpart, Captain William. H. Hall R.N.⁵⁹ The relationship between the two departments was largely

based on the exchange of information though there were times that they undertook intelligence-gathering missions together.⁶⁰

The other key relationship that Brackenbury built up was with the Foreign Office. Before Brackenbury's arrival there was little contact between the two. In fact the only contact appears to have been the passing on of military attaché reports and it was understood that despite the fact that they were military officers their reports were for the Foreign Office. One key reason for Brackenbury's keenness was the fact that the Foreign Office had a budget for intelligence that was approximately six times the size of his. The main element of this was the Secret Intelligence Service (S.I.S), which spent most of its budget on coping with the threat of Irish terrorists but the Foreign Office did use some of it for work overseas, most notably in Persia and Afghanistan where it was able to 'buy' the plans for a Russian invasion of Afghanistan.⁶¹ It appears, from the testimony of officers who served in the branch during this period that from time to time some of the Foreign Office's secret service money was used by the Intelligence Branch to fund overseas missions.⁶² A large amount of Foreign Office intelligence came from its ambassadors and military attachés, and like the Intelligence Branch much of this came freely from legitimate sources without recourse to financial inducement. Problems occurred when they tried to gather intelligence themselves, given that they were often followed, as were other embassy staff. It was therefore much easier for a visiting officer from the Intelligence Branch, who would only be in the country for a few weeks, to move freely without arousing suspicion. It was partly for this reason, and also to save any potential embarrassment, that Brackenbury ordered his staff not to meet publicly with any embassy staff when they were on intelligence work.⁶³

An interesting insight into how Brackenbury built these relationships is found in a letter he wrote to Lord Lansdowne in 1892. By this time Brackenbury had left the department and was working in India. Speaking of the relationship with other departments he said:

There was, at first, some little jealousy and suspicion both in the Foreign, Colonial and War offices of this (the quality of the Intelligence Branch reports). But when they grew to see how useful we could be, and how much trouble we often saved them, it all ceased. I made them understand we wanted to work for them and with them, and we all became fast friends.⁶⁴

This shows a skill in diplomacy and man-management that many have ignored regarding Brackenbury. Throughout his career he endeavoured to illustrate that his work was important and useful to others. In an atmosphere of inter-departmental rivalry Brackenbury was able to get them to work together by showing that they could serve each other's interests. Brackenbury knew that there was still hostility within other departments towards the work of the Intelligence Branch, in particular, within the Foreign Office, but he chose to ignore this and continued to work well with them. Another reason he made the branch important was by pre-empting events.

When I knew that any subject was engaging the attention of government, I used to prepare a paper showing the state of the question from one point of view, and send it either to all the cabinet ministers, or as to such only as I thought would be interested in it, and I have over and over again received their personal thanks for the papers sent.

Such an attitude, of providing material before being asked about such matters, was to a large extent a new departure for the branch.

Hartington Commission

Although it had little to do directly with the work of the Intelligence Branch, Brackenbury's membership of the Hartington Commission deserves comment, especially as it came about partly because he was Head of the Intelligence Branch.

The setting up of the committee was an attempt by the government to defuse the hysteria caused by the invasion scares of the late 1880s. Much of the debate had been caused by the mobilisation plans of Brackenbury and Ardagh, and in particular the latter's report, supported by Brackenbury, that London lay completely undefended.⁶⁵ A Royal Commission was established under Lord Hartington, who had served as Secretary of State for War from December 1882 to June 1885. By limiting the terms of reference to looking at the administration rather than a detailed account of what was perceived to be 'wrong' with the army and navy, the government hoped to limit its scope and avoid a report that suggested the need for a large-scale overhaul of the armed forces. It has also been suggested that the appointment of three former Secretaries of State for War, Hartington, W.H.Smith and Henry Campbell-Bannerman, was a clear attempt to avoid criticism of the War Office administration and the idea of civilian control of the War Office.⁶⁶ Added to this, another key member was Lord Randolph Churchill, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was an ardent campaigner for the reduction of military spending on the army.

Brackenbury's presence on the Commission was partly recognition of him as an army reformer but also because it was his report that had highlighted many of the problems. It was undoubtedly hoped that his name, attached to a report, which, with the background of the other members, was likely to support the government and the principle of civilian control, would help to defuse the public argument. There was also a more practical reason in that one of the questions that the Hartington Commission asked was whether there was any link between Naval and Military Intelligence Departments, and also whether this should be enhanced: there was even a suggestion that they might be combined.

The commission was first appointed on the 15th May 1888, but it took till July 1889 before the first part of the report was published, with the second following in February 1890. The minutes of evidence were never published.⁶⁷ The report commented on four areas. Firstly the measures required to secure full and sufficient administrative harmony between the two departments; secondly, the internal administration of the Admiralty; thirdly the internal administration of the War Office; and fourthly the relation of the Treasury to the War Office and the Admiralty and matters of financial control generally. The evidence was in two parts. Firstly there was a list of written questions that were sent to various officials, both civilian and military, and secondly a number of people were interviewed directly by the Commission. Many senior politicians including, Gladstone, Salisbury, Ripon, the Earl of Grey, Campbell-Bannerman, Hugh Childers, Stanhope and Hartington himself gave evidence to the commission. Admiral Hay, Admiral Hornby, Admiral Hood, Admiral Mends, Vice-Admiral Hoskins, and Captain Beresford represented the Naval viewpoint, whilst the Duke of Cambridge, Wolseley, General Adye, General Simmons, and Sir Ralph Thomson, the Permanent Secretary to the War Office, represented the Army. There were two main questions, although each had various sub-sections. The first was concerned with the defence of the Empire and matters of cooperation between the two services. The second question dealt with the relationship between the civilian and military side of both services. Given the diversity of those questioned it is not surprising that there was little agreement on any of the subjects brought before the Commission.⁶⁸

The second section of the evidence was taken in front of the commission itself. The commission sat for 16 days, between the 16th November 1888 and the 11th April

1889, including a gap of nearly three months between December 1888 and March 1889. Very few of the commissioners sat for all 16 days. In fact Hartington, as chairman, was virtually the only one present throughout. Brackenbury attended 13 days, which was better than most, whilst Sir Randolph Churchill, though by political weight one of the most important members, was only present for 3 days. Other leading members, like W.H.Smith and Campbell-Bannerman, were also missing most of the time. It meant that in the end the report became largely the work of Hartington, Brackenbury, Sir Richard Temple M.P, T.H.Ismay and Vice-Admiral Sir F.W.Richards. This probably goes a long way to explaining why Churchill and Campbell-Bannerman dissented from the final report.

The basic differences between the two services in administrative terms were in relation to professionalism and royal influence. The commission asserted that unlike the Navy, the Army, through the Commander-in-Chief, had the right of direct approach to the Crown on military matters. The case was made by Lord Esher that:

The Navy is a constitutional force. Every Commission is signed by the (Admiralty) Board. The Army is a Royal force and, while the Queen never interferes with the Navy, she interferes very much with the Army.⁶⁹

The other problem with administration was the status of the Commander-in-Chief. Unlike the Navy he was, in the word of the Royal Commission, “the only officer who had any direct responsibility to the Secretary of State”. He had far too much responsibility, and the Royal Commission reported that:

This system appears to us to involve excessive centralisation of responsibility in the person of the Commander-in-Chief on whom the whole executive command, administration and supply of the Army now devolve.

It was in the light of this that the Hartington Commission recommended that the office of Commander-in-Chief should be abolished. In the hope of avoiding royal disapproval it added the proviso that the change was to happen on the retirement of

the current Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge, who it will be remembered was the Queen's cousin. It was recommended that the new position of Chief of Staff be created, who would be the senior of five senior military officers who would form a War Office Council. Under the new system the five heads would be responsible to the Secretary of State for the administration of their departments. The Chief of Staff would be given responsibility for military planning, mobilisation, consulting with the Admiralty, intelligence and the defence of the United Kingdom. The idea was to free such an individual from the more executive duties of the Commander-in-Chief and make him:

...responsible for preparing plans of military operations, collecting and co-ordinating information of all kinds, and generally tendering advice upon all matters of organisation and the preparation of the army for war.⁷⁰

Whilst this was one suggested scheme there was another, drawn up by Churchill, who wanted the creation of a Ministry of Defence. The Minister would be a senior member of the Cabinet. He would be advised by two professional heads at the army and navy, who would take over the duties of the Secretary of State for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty. The two military men would be members of the cabinet, but only when matters of a military consequence were being discussed. Such a policy was unpopular with most politicians, because it diminished their control, as the professional heads of the army and navy would run their departments largely independently of the government. It was also unpopular with many soldiers, sailors and politicians because it would leave the services without an individual representative at cabinet level who would represent their interests alone. The scheme did have its supporters, including Brackenbury, Childers, the Duke of Cambridge, Wolseley and Stanhope.⁷¹ This system also included a Chief of Staff for the Army,

who would be the direct subordinate and deputy for the new professional head of the Army. Under Churchill's suggestion this appeared to be an acceptable idea to Wolseley, as in this form the Chief of Staff would not be the senior soldier.

The proposed creation of a General Staff, as envisaged by the Hartington Commission, caused a great deal of controversy, and outside of the commission itself, was very unpopular. The Duke of Cambridge and Lord Wolseley were for once united in their opposition. The Queen opposed it as she continued to hope that her son, the Duke of Connaught, would succeed as Commander-in-Chief. Most damning of all was the objection of Campbell-Bannerman. He was the only member of the commission to object to this idea in principle. However his objection was enough to give a somewhat sceptical government the excuse they needed to avoid the conflict with the Royal Family that creating a Chief of Staff would cause. In the end a War Office Council was established with the Commander-in-Chief as the senior member. It looked like a reform but in fact nothing happened, and the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa heard evidence that the council rarely met and was never called upon to vote on any matter.⁷² The attempt to create a body similar to the Admiralty Board had failed.

There is no doubt that Wolseley believed that Brackenbury was responsible for the Hartington Commission's recommendation for the creation of a Chief of Staff. He believed that the new post had been suggested so that Brackenbury himself would be the ideal choice for the position. This caused a cooling in the relations between the two men, as Wolseley knew he was the obvious choice to be the next Commander-in-Chief but would not necessarily be for the position of Chief-of-Staff. The belief that the Chief of Staff would be Brackenbury was not just held by Wolseley. Grierson

wrote in his diary on the day he read the Hartington Commission's report: "Very good, especially creation of Chief of Staff. Sure to be Brackenbury".⁷³ Callwell agreed with Wolseley's opinion that Brackenbury, and to a lesser extent Major George Clarke, had been the driving force behind the commission's recommendation, but did not see this as a necessarily bad thing.⁷⁴ Brackenbury's case for the appointment was supported by the fact that the proposed General Staff was to be made up largely of his existing Intelligence Branch.⁷⁵ The Government was also reluctant to accept it. Largely it was the age old fear that such a 'professional' appointment could give rise to a disturbing level of militarism; the idea being that the more you prepared for war the more likely it would be. The other fear was that if they accepted this one part of the commission's report they would be under pressure to accept the rest.

Whilst Brackenbury obviously wanted the Chief of Staff appointment, he may not have intended it to be at the expense of Wolseley. Brackenbury supported Churchill's scheme for a national Ministry of Defence.⁷⁶ This scheme provided for a professional head of the army, which would have suited Wolseley. It is more than likely that Brackenbury saw himself fulfilling a Chief of Staff's role under him as he had done throughout their service overseas together. Unfortunately there is no direct evidence to support this. The duties of the Chief of Staff were considered to be the same under either proposal. If Churchill's scheme had been accepted it would have pleased both Wolseley and Brackenbury. The problem was that Hartington was opposed to it, largely on the grounds that he knew it would never win political support. The report was uncommitted on the creation of a Minister of Defence, but strong in its support of the post of Chief of Staff. Brackenbury was naturally ambitious, but the creation of a Chief of Staff was not a new idea of his to attain high office, as Wolseley later

suggested. Brackenbury had first publicly urged the creation of such a post in 1867 in his series of articles on Military Reform.⁷⁷ This was obviously at a time when he was in no position to be considered for the position, and nor did his career to date suggest that he ever would, as this was prior to his association with Wolseley. If this suggestion is read in the light of his 1867 article then it is obvious that the proposal was one that was thought important for the modernisation of the army, rather than for personal advantage. The creation of a General Staff would fit in nicely with Brackenbury's constant theme - the improved efficiency of the army. Most of the reforms he proposed in his articles had this aim in mind. A General Staff would improve the efficiency by planning, preparation and improved organisation throughout the army and it could be argued that such a body was a logical next step from mobilisation plans. A General Staff would have taken on the duties of the mobilisation and intelligence departments in a much more efficient way. It will be remembered that whilst Brackenbury saw the desirability of having both departments together he had insisted that the mobilisation section become separate as he had insufficient funds and manpower to do both duties effectively. A General Staff would have allowed him to do this. However, whatever his reasons, there was no creation of a Chief of Staff, nor was there until shortly after Brackenbury's retirement.⁷⁸

Brackenbury's appointment to the commission caused him a number of problems. On the 12th December 1888 he was sent for by the Duke of Cambridge, "and he expressed to me in very strong terms his disapproval of the appointment of a Chief of Staff", even if this appointment were to be under the Commander-in-Chief. It was the Duke of Cambridge's view that this would "destroy the connection between the Crown and the army, and that neither H.R.H (Cambridge) nor any good man would hold office

under these conditions". This placed Brackenbury in a difficult position, and he consulted Stanhope on this matter. Brackenbury declared that his view on the creation of a Chief of Staff had not been altered by the Duke's position, but he asked Stanhope: "Am I, an officer on the staff of H.R.H, to advocate on the Royal Commission a course which H.R.H has strongly condemned?". Brackenbury offered two possible solutions, that either he resign from the Hartington Commission or from the War Office.

The former would, I think have an unfortunate affect, as it would be misinterpreted by the public and the press. The latter would impugn no one but myself, and I am quite prepared to sacrifice myself to carry through what I consider a most necessary reform. But I am unwilling to take a step, which will probably attract some attention, without ascertaining what the views of Her Majesty's Government are, by whom I was placed on the Royal Commission.⁷⁹

This really was a dilemma for Brackenbury, and one that only the government could solve. As Brackenbury pointed out, he had been placed on this commission by the government, but the normal military discipline meant that it was unconventional, to say the least, for a Lieutenant General to publicly and before a Royal Commission disagree with the Commander-in-Chief. This perhaps illustrates once again the slightly precarious position that Brackenbury was in. Had it been Wolseley in this position it is hard to believe that he would have hesitated to contradict the Duke, but Brackenbury did not have that security of position. Wolseley could not be disposed of easily, yet Brackenbury could simply not be re-employed when his tenure as Head of the Intelligence Branch expired. This may explain his anxiety about his future appointment a few years later when his tenure at the Intelligence Branch was due to expire.⁸⁰

Stanhope replied that he had discussed the matter with his cabinet colleagues and that they all agreed that whilst his position was difficult there should be no question of

him resigning. Stanhope went on to say that being appointed to the Royal Commission gave Brackenbury, “absolute and entire freedom to follow and express his opinion on all the matters referred to the Commission”. Stanhope tried to make the case that no one would object if Brackenbury were to criticise the policy of the Secretary of State, and that therefore he should be free to criticise the policy of the Commander-in-Chief if necessary.

But in this you are asked to be a member of the commission in order that you might join in telling the country irrespective of the views of the Secretary of State or the Commander in Chief, what you think wanting in the organisation of the war Office; as if you were to hold that your position precluded you from doing so, it would render any enquiry of this sort, which may be essential to the public service, nugatory. We therefore are strongly of opinion, and I venture to express it to you, that you are fully justified in going on to the end with the work you have undertaken on the Commission.⁸¹

The significance of Brackenbury’s problems should not be overlooked. It would be naive to think that he acted “solely upon grounds of public duty”, as Stanhope stated. He undoubtedly had private motivation, some of which we may never know.⁸²

However, that he was driving to improve the efficiency of the army cannot be doubted, and it was in this way that he was acting “upon grounds of public duty”, as he had always endeavoured to do. His career, his writing and his service had constantly demonstrated a determination to improve the efficiency, and therefore the capability, of the army. It was to this end that both he and Stanhope believed that the creation of a Chief of Staff was necessary. It is likely that Brackenbury had convinced Stanhope of the need for this appointment, but he would not have needed much persuading. Programmes like mobilisation plans, the so-called ‘Stanhope Storehouses’ and similar projects did really require a Chief of Staff to operate them efficiently. As Stanhope was committed to these programmes a Chief of Staff would have seemed an obvious and appropriate next step.

The Hartington Commission report was, by the standards of the day, small in size. Yet its findings could have had a profound effect on the military forces of Britain and the Empire. A Chief of Staff and more general cooperation and planning between the two services would have improved efficiency and effectiveness considerably. Indeed The War Office Reconstitution Committee of 1904 (commonly called the Esher Committee), which came in the wake of the disaster of the South African War, remarked that:

We unhesitatingly assert that if the recommendations of the majority of the Hartington Commission had not been ignored, the country would have been saved the loss of many thousands of lives, and of many millions of pounds, subsequently sacrificed in the South African War... Upon many material points we have done no more than adopt and develop the principles laid down by the Hartington Commission, especially as regards the creation of the branch of a Chief of the General Staff.⁸³

Conclusion

During his appointment Brackenbury did much to improve the Intelligence Branch. As well as enlarging it he also increased both the quantity and quality of the work, it was well collated and its use to the government was proved by the rise in importance of the Intelligence Branch, which was driven by the civilian side of the War Office. This is also illustrated by the fact that Brackenbury was given authority to present reports direct to the Secretary of State for War, and other members of the cabinet rather than having to go through the usual War Office channels of either the Commander in Chief, the Adjutant General or the Quarter Master General.⁸⁴ The Foreign Office became very interested in the product of the Intelligence Branch, as it seemed able to gain more accurate information than they did by their own efforts. Nevertheless, despite recognising the benefit of their work the Foreign Office viewed the Intelligence Branch with suspicion largely because, according to Parritt, they saw

them as inexperienced amateurs whereas they were the professionals.⁸⁵ Brackenbury was given permission by the Secretary of State, and reluctantly, the Commander-in-Chief to correspond directly, if necessary, with the Foreign Office and the Private Under Secretary for the Colonies. This was on the strict understanding that he was merely to provide information and not to touch upon matters of policy. It was a big jump in prestige for the branch, and one that had only come about because it had proved its worth through the quality of intelligence they were providing. The biggest step forward was that Brackenbury had now established the principle that the Head of the Intelligence Branch should be consulted on military matters concerning foreign powers. This was a significant advance from the position when Brackenbury had first been appointed, when it was considered, “a harmless but rather useless appendage to the War Office”.⁸⁶ Brackenbury had changed this not only by improving the amount and quality of intelligence, but by also making those who received the intelligence appreciate it. Given the size of the Branch the results were little short of amazing. This was due partly to its reorganisation, but also because of the presence of the brightest and best of the army. From Brackenbury down every man was hand-picked to be the best for the post. It was their hard work and commitment that enabled them to produce and collate such vast quantities of intelligence, so much so that the quality of the work they produced was on a par with that of the vast general staffs of Europe. Grierson recalled that Count Von Schlieffen, Chief of the Great General Staff in Berlin, once told him that he was amazed that such a small staff could produce such work and do such a good job.⁸⁷ With only 18 permanent staff and a budget of £11,000 a year the Intelligence Branch was producing material on a par with the German General Staff that numbered over 300 and had a budget of £270,000 a year for intelligence.⁸⁸ It was truly a remarkable reorganisation that had caused this: achieved

by enlarging the department and having hand picked men for the positions. It was not just the selection, but also the guidance Brackenbury provided in techniques and manners of intelligence gathering that were so impressive. His rules for officers travelling to gather intelligence continued to be used for many years to come.

Brackenbury's Legacy

Brackenbury's five year term as Head of the Intelligence Branch came to an end in 1891, and he was replaced by Major-General Edward F Chapman who arrived from India. Brackenbury left to take up the appointment of Military Member of the Governor-General's (Viceroy's) Council. Chapman's time in charge, though largely through no fault of his own, was something of a backwards step for the Intelligence Branch. His major problem was that he had never served outside of India and was only returning home through ill health. It has been suggested that Lord Roberts largely engineered this appointment in a desire to have someone with vast experience of India and who understood the Russian threat. Chapman seems to have been liked personally by his staff but they all quickly recognised his limitations.⁸⁹ He later confided in Brackenbury that he had little idea of what was going on in his department and asked for his help.⁹⁰ Whilst in India Brackenbury continued to keep in touch with many of his former officers who were still in the Intelligence Branch. Most notable among these was Grierson who continued to keep Brackenbury supplied with documents from the Intelligence Branch.⁹¹ During Chapman's time the relationship with the Foreign Office soured. Unlike Brackenbury, who had worked for them when he was a military attaché, Chapman had no previous experience of the Foreign Office. Unlike Brackenbury, Chapman failed to keep close control of officers travelling abroad and was notably embarrassed by an officer who, on a mission to Russia threw his weight around in the British Embassy, leading to an official complaint by the

ambassador and the Foreign Office.⁹²

Chapman was succeeded in 1896 by Ardagh who was able to restore the branch to the level Brackenbury had left and good relations were restored with the Foreign and Colonial Offices. The Intelligence Branch was much criticised during the South African War for not having foreseen the capabilities of the Boers.⁹³ However, the Royal Commission and numerous enquiries found that the Intelligence Branch had provided accurate and relevant information to the necessary authorities. It had partly been ignored and some important documents never got further than the Commander-in-Chief's office. Despite its limited numbers and finance the Branch proved itself successful during the South African War. Brackenbury's legacy was actually long lasting. The system he created, except for minor changes, lasted intact until 1965. Whilst partly saying something about the lethargy of the War Office it is perhaps partial proof of the soundness of what Brackenbury was able to achieve during his five years in charge of the Intelligence Branch.

The other great legacy of Brackenbury's time in the Intelligence Branch was the start of the mobilisation scheme. His own view on the importance of these schemes was later set out in a personal letter to Sir George White.

I was for five years teaching military history, and few men have studied the big problems of war more closely than I have done. All my study impressed firmly on my mind the conviction that no country was ever yet saved by fortifications, and that nothing can enable us to beat our enemies but a strong army for field fighting, and a strong Navy to sweep the seas.⁹⁴

This was to prove vital during the South African War where the smoothness and ease of mobilisation shocked even the War Office. Although a great deal of credit needs to go to Sir John Ardagh, who organised and fine-tuned Brackenbury's plans, and Colonel John Cowans, who put the plans into practice, it has to be remembered that it

was Brackenbury who drew them up. They were deliberately open-ended so that they would suit all purposes and they also had the effect of creating the impetus for a formal declaration of what the Army's duties were. Although the significance of the Stanhope Memorandum has been overplayed, and has been rightly questioned in more recent times, it was significant, if for no other reason, that it formally set down the duties of the Army for the first time.⁹⁵ It thus allowed for more formal planning, such as mobilisation schemes, to take place and be effective. As Howard Bailes has commented:

In an almost flawless mobilisation, 112,000 regular troops were equipped and sent to South Africa between 7th October 1899 and 30th January 1900. This was an unprecedented achievement for Britain and a tribute to the work of mobilisation begun by Sir Henry Brackenbury fourteen years previously.⁹⁶

Notes

¹ Parritt, Lt-Colonel B.A.H *The Intelligencers: The Story of British Military Intelligence up to 1914* (Ashford: The Intelligence Corps, 1971), p.151.

² Parritt, Lt-Colonel B.A.H *The Intelligencers*, p.152.

³ Maurice, Maj-General Sir F and Arthur, Sir George *The Life of Lord Wolseley* (London: William Heinemann, 1924), p.224.

⁴ Fergusson, Thomas G *British Military Intelligence 1870-1914* (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 1984), p.82.

⁵ There is a slight problem in terms of researching the Intelligence Branch, in that the War Office/ Ministry of Defence Library that held the materials that Fergusson and Parritt used no longer exists. Some of its material still survives, but no record was kept of where the archives went. Some naturally ended up at the Intelligence Corps Museum at Chicksands and the National Archives at Kew (and I have found some material at both the National Army Museum and the Royal Artillery Museum at Woolwich). However a great deal of material appears to have been lost.

⁶ The best accounts of the Intelligence Branch during this period are Fergusson, Thomas G *British Military Intelligence 1870-1914* and Parritt, Lt-Colonel B.A.H *The Intelligencers*. See also Haswell, Jock *British Military Intelligence* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), Beaver, W.C 'The Development of the Intelligence Division and its role in aspects of Imperial Policy making, 1854-1901: The Military Mind of Imperialism' DPhil diss. Oxford University, 1976. I have been unable to obtain a copy of the latter, and so cannot comment, other than to acknowledge its existence.

⁷ For the best accounts of the development of the Intelligence Branch in its early days see Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence 1870-1914* and Parritt, *The Intelligencers*.

⁸ Gleichen, Edward *A Guardsman's Memories* (London: William Blackwood, 1932), p.77.

⁹ Parritt, Lt-Colonel B.A.H *The Intelligencers*, p.155.

¹⁰ Parritt, Lt-Colonel B.A.H *The Intelligencers*, p.156.

¹¹ To save confusion the term Intelligence Branch is used throughout. On the 1st June 1887 the title was changed to The Intelligence Department and Brackenbury became the first Director of Military Intelligence. On the 1st April 1888 Brackenbury was promoted to Lieutenant-General and the Department was thus raised to a Division.

¹² Fergusson, Thomas G *British Military Intelligence 1870-1914*, pp.85-87.

¹³ Parritt, Lt-Colonel B.A.H *The Intelligencers*, p.152.

¹⁴ 'General Sketch of the Situation Abroad and at Home from a Military Standpoint. By Major-General H Brackenbury 3rd August 1886'. National Archives WO33/46, pp.12-15. Also see 'Memorandum by Lt-General Brackenbury and Maj-General Newmarch National Archives WO32/6349.

¹⁵ 'General Sketch of the Situation Abroad and at Home from a Military Standpoint' National Archives WO33/46. Brackenbury also discusses the invasion plans in a letter to Lord Roberts 22nd July 1886.

Roberts Papers, National Army Museum, Chelsea.

¹⁶ General Alexei Nikolaievitch Kuropatkin was highly regarded in military circles at the time but was later to take the blame, slightly unfairly, for the Russian disasters in Russo-Japanese War in 1904.

¹⁷ This matter and the views of Lord Roberts are looked at in more detail in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

¹⁸ Stead, W.T 'What is the Truth about the Navy?' *Pall Mall Gazette*, (15th September 1884).

¹⁹ 'Memorandum on Mobilisation Scheme' 19th April 1886 By Major-General Henry Brackenbury to Quarter Master General Arthur Herbert, and Adjutant General Garnet Wolseley, National Archives WO33/46, p.1.

²⁰ Beckett, Ian 'Edward Stanhope at the War Office 1887-92' *Journal of Strategic Studies* (June 1982), p.299.

²¹ 'Memorandum on Mobilisation Scheme' 19th April 1886 National Archives WO33/46, p.8.

²² All the following figures are taken from Brackenbury's Memorandum to the Quarter Master General and the Adjutant General, National Archives WO33/46, which was subsequently circulated to the Secretary of State for War.

²³ 'Memorandum on Mobilisation Scheme' 19th April 1886 National Archives WO33/46, p.1.

²⁴ 'Memorandum on Mobilisation Scheme' 19th April 1886 National Archives WO33/46, pp.2-3.

²⁵ 'Memorandum on Mobilisation Scheme' 19th April 1886 National Archives WO33/46, p.3.

²⁶ 'Memorandum on Mobilisation Scheme' 19th April 1886 National Archives WO33/46, p.4.

²⁷ 'Mobilisation Scheme Memorandum and Plans, prepared in the Intelligence Branch of the War Office', 14th April & 1st December 1886 National Archives WO33/46.

²⁸ Brackenbury to Ardagh 15th August 1887, National Archives WO30/40/2.

²⁹ Brackenbury to Ardagh 15th August 1887, National Archives WO30/40/2.

³⁰ The relationship between Brackenbury and Ardagh predated their active service, or any relationship with Wolseley. When Brackenbury had been Professor of Military History at Woolwich Ardagh, according to T.H.S. Escott, had been a student he had taken "special interest" in and in some ways Brackenbury viewed him as his protégé. Ardagh was Brackenbury's companion on several of his European battlefield tours.

³¹ Brackenbury to Ardagh 15th October 1887, National Archives WO30/40/2.

³² Callwell, Maj-General Sir Charles. E *Stray Recollection* (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1923), p.305.

³³ Only one real work has looked at these archives specifically. Beaver, William. C 'The Intelligence Division Library 1854-1902'.

³⁴ Brackenbury to Roberts 12th March 1892, Roberts Papers, National Army Museum, R11/42.

³⁵ Although he was given command of II Corps he died of a heart attack before he had chance to lead them in battle. Grierson left considerable private papers and diaries. They were acquired by his biographer D.S.Macdiarmid, but were unfortunately destroyed upon his death. All that remains is Macdiarmid's book, which quotes widely from the diaries.

³⁶ Macdiarmid, D.S *The Life of Lieut. General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson* (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1923), p.63.

³⁷ Macdiarmid, D.S *The Life of Lieut. General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson*, p.82.

³⁸ Bond, Brian *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p.171. During Brackenbury's time in charge there were few who had not qualified from the Staff College. It is difficult to say for certain, as attached officers were not officially on the Army list for the Intelligence Branch. Of approximately twenty-eight officers who served under Brackenbury, only five had not attended the Staff College.

³⁹ Callwell, Maj-General Sir Charles. E *Stray Recollections*, p.306.

⁴⁰ Gleichen, Maj-General Lord Edward *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.143.

⁴¹ Callwell, Maj-General Sir Charles. E *Stray Recollections*, p.308.

⁴² Translating Russian was charged at 3 to 5 shillings per 72 words, and French and German at 1 to 2 shillings per 72 words. The rates could vary depending on the technicality of the work.

⁴³ Parritt, Lt-Colonel B.A.H *The Intelligencers*, p.154 is a table showing the organisation of the Intelligence Branch. Similar tables can be found at the back of Fergusson's *British Military Intelligence 1870-1914*.

⁴⁴ Fergusson, Thomas G *British Military Intelligence 1870-1914*, p.85.

-
- ⁴⁵ Lt General H Brackenbury, DMI. *Notes for the Information of Officers attending Foreign Manoeuvres*, Intelligence Division, 1890. Intelligence Corps Museum, Chicksands.
- ⁴⁶ Repington, Lieut-General Charles. *A Vestigia* (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1919), p.83.
- ⁴⁷ Macdiarmid, D.S *The Life of Lieut. General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson*, pp.86-96.
- ⁴⁸ Macdiarmid, D.S *The Life of Lieut. General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson*, p.100.
- ⁴⁹ Waters, Brig-General W.H.H *Secret and Confidential* (London: John Murray, 1926), pp.27-28.
- ⁵⁰ Macdiarmid, D.S *The Life of Lieut. General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson*, p.87. The slight irony of this was that it was Grierson who undertook the negotiations with the French General Staff in 1906 about the prosecution of a war against Germany.
- ⁵¹ For a more detailed account of these exploits than this thesis allows see Fisher, John *Gentleman Spies: Intelligence Agents in the British Empire* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2002).
- ⁵² Fergusson, Thomas *British Military Intelligence 1870-1914*, pp.89-91 and Haswell, Jock *British Military Intelligence*, pp.44-46. One of Baden Powell's more recent biographer's also includes details of his work for Brackenbury. Jeal, Tim *Baden-Powell* (London: Pimlico Press, 1995), pp.123-126.
- ⁵³ Haswell, Jock *British Military Intelligence*, p.44.
- ⁵⁴ Jeal, Tim *Baden-Powell*, pp.123-126 & Haswell, Jock *British Military Intelligence*, p.45. The usefulness of such missions was not lost on Brackenbury's successors and were continued. Brackenbury's successor would obtain intelligence on Cuba and the United States via a young Winston Churchill. For details see Stafford, David *Churchill and Secret Service* (London: John Murray Ltd, 1997), pp.13-15.
- ⁵⁵ Gleichen, Maj-General Lord Edward *A Guardsman's Memories*, pp.138-139.
- ⁵⁶ Lieut-General H Brackenbury, DMI. *Rules to be observed by Officers Travelling, who are endeavouring to obtain Information for the Intelligence Division*, Intelligence Corps Museum, Chicksands. No date exists for this document, but due to the fact that Brackenbury is a Lieut-General we know it is after 1st April 1888 and before he left the Branch in April 1891. There is a date of 1890 on the document but it is not clear whether this is actually for the whole document or just the accompanying note.
- ⁵⁷ Lieut-General H Brackenbury, DMI. *Rules to be observed by Officers Travelling, who are endeavouring to obtain Information for the Intelligence Division*, Intelligence Corps Museum, Chicksands.
- ⁵⁸ Brackenbury to Roberts 5th August 1891. Roberts Papers, National Army Museum, R11/42.
- ⁵⁹ Fergusson, Thomas G *British Military Intelligence 1870-1914*, pp.87-88. Captain William.H.Hall also served on the Hartington Commission, as one of the two Secretaries. For further information on development of Naval Intelligence see Andrew, Christopher *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1985), for a general view, and Beresford, Lord Charles *The Memoirs of Lord Charles Beresford* 2 Volumes (London: 1914), who was involved in its creation and development.
- ⁶⁰ Fergusson, Thomas. G *British Military Intelligence 1870-1914*, p.91.
- ⁶¹ Fergusson, Thomas. G *British Military Intelligence 1870-1914*, p.88.
- ⁶² Callwell, Major-General Sir Charles. E *Stray Recollections*, p.327.
- ⁶³ Lieut-General H Brackenbury, DMI. *Rules to be observed by Officers Travelling, who are endeavouring to obtain Information for the Intelligence Division*. Intelligence Corps Museum, Chicksands.
- ⁶⁴ Brackenbury to Lansdowne 17th October 1892 Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ⁶⁵ Memorandum on Mobilisation scheme. National Archives WO33/46.
- ⁶⁶ Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.46.
- ⁶⁷ The non-publication of the minutes was largely an attempt to prevent any further debate on the subject, which would undoubtedly have happen given the diverging opinions expressed by the various soldiers, sailors and civilians. The Minutes of Evidence taken and received by the Hartington Commission do survive and are held under National Archives HO73/35/3.
- ⁶⁸ The Minutes of Evidence included a document which declared who supported which of the recommendations, both amongst the Commission and those who gave evidence.
- ⁶⁹ Brett, M. V *The Journals and Letters of Viscount Esher*. Volume I (London: Ivor Nicolson & Watson, 1934), p.269.
- ⁷⁰ *Report of the Hartington Commission*, 1889. National Archives HO73/36/4.
- ⁷¹ The Minutes of Evidence of the Hartington Commission. National Archives HO73/35/3.
- ⁷² *Royal Commission on the War in South Africa* (Elgin Commission) (London: H.M.S.O, 1903).
- ⁷³ Macdiarmid, D.S *The Life of Lieut. General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson*, p.82.

-
- ⁷⁴ Callwell, Maj-General Sir Charles *Stray Recollections*, p.327.
- ⁷⁵ Report of the Hartington Commission. National Archives HO73/36/4.
- ⁷⁶ Brackenbury may have had a hand in Lord Randolph Churchill's drawing up of the scheme for National Minister of Defence. Callwell claims that during this period Churchill was often at Queen Anne's Gate to discuss matters with Brackenbury. Callwell, Maj-General Sir Charles *Stray Recollections*, pp.327-8.
- ⁷⁷ Brackenbury, Henry 'Military Reform' Part V *Fraser's Magazine* Volume 76 (August 1867), pp.214-215.
- ⁷⁸ Ironically the position of Chief of Staff was created by the Government of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who's lone dissention to such a post being created gave the Government of the day the justification it needed.
- ⁷⁹ All quotations taken from Brackenbury to Stanhope 27th February 1889, Stanhope Papers, Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone.
- ⁸⁰ In another example of his insecurity about his career, despite the fact that he was now a Lieutenant-General, Brackenbury used all his contact to gain his appointment in India. Stanhope, Lord Salisbury, W.H. Smith and Lord Knutsford were all asked to speak to Lord Cross, the Secretary of State for India, on his behalf.
- ⁸¹ All quotations from Stanhope reply to Brackenbury's of 27th February 1889. Stanhope to Brackenbury 2nd March 1889, Stanhope Papers, Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone.
- ⁸² Stanhope to Brackenbury 2nd March 1889, Stanhope Papers, Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone.
- ⁸³ *Report of the War Office Reconstitution Committee* (Esher Committee). Part I (1904) H.M.S.O, London. Pp161.
- ⁸⁴ This led to an occurrence when Brackenbury saw Cabinet Papers that had not be shown to anyone else in the Army, including Cambridge and Wolseley. Collieridge Grove (Stanhope's Military Secretary) to Brackenbury 3rd July 1888, Stanhope Papers, Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone.
- ⁸⁵ Parritt, Lieut-Colonel B.A.H *The Intelligencers*, pp.160-161.
- ⁸⁶ Maurice, Maj-General Sir F and Arthur, Sir George *The Life of Lord Wolseley*, p.224.
- ⁸⁷ Macdiarmid, D.S *The Life of Lieut. General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson*, pp.89-90.
- ⁸⁸ Amery, Leopold *The Times History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902* (London: Sampson Low, 1909), pp.39-40.
- ⁸⁹ Repington, Lieut-Colonel Charles a Court *Vestigia*, p.89 and Gleichen, Maj-General Lord Edward A *Guardsman's Memories*, p.177.
- ⁹⁰ Chapman to Brackenbury. Chapman Papers 21st October 1892. National Archives WO106/16.
- ⁹¹ Letter books of Lieutenant General Sir Henry Brackenbury. Royal Artillery Museum, Woolwich. They include numerous letters between the two.
- ⁹² This account is told by both Fergusson, p.107 and Parritt, pp.162-163.
- ⁹³ The major fault of the Intelligence was that they expected the Boers to use small raiding parties rather than a full-scale invasion. That is why the figure of 9,000 men is sometimes quoted from the Intelligence Branch as the number they believed the Boers would place in the field. They believed that this force would be used to raid, and the rest of the Boer force would defend the frontier from a British strike.
- ⁹⁴ Brackenbury to White 5th December 1892 Brackenbury letter books Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich. There is a certain historical irony in Brackenbury's remarks given that Sir George White was during the South African War to retreat behind fortifications with a field army, and gain much criticism for so doing.
- ⁹⁵ Beckett, Ian *The Victorians at War* (London: Hambeldon & London, 2003). Chapter 16 'The Improbable Probability'. In many ways this is a slightly updated version of the authors own article 'The Stanhope Memorandum of 1888: A Reinterpretation', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 57 (1984), pp.240-47.
- ⁹⁶ Bailes, Howard 'Technology and Imperialism: A case study of the Victorian Army in Africa', *Journal of Victorian Studies*, VolXXIV (Autumn1980), pp.82-104.

An ‘African’ in India: **Brackenbury as Military Member of the Council of the Viceroy**

Introduction

During the years 1891 to 1896 Brackenbury held the rather grandiose title of Military Member of the Council of the Viceroy of India. This period that Brackenbury spent in India can all too easily be viewed as little more than an interlude between the two very significant appointments he held at the War Office. We have already seen how important his time as Head of the Intelligence Branch was, and whilst his success there is plain to see, it is harder to see what lasting effect Brackenbury had in India. Perhaps this is not surprising. Being able to change and leave your mark on a department at the War Office, despite its obvious difficulties, was far easier than making an impact on the government of a huge country such as Imperial India. This chapter will look at the context into which Brackenbury arrived in India in 1891, looking briefly at the British position in India at that time. It will then go on to examine what he did there, his attitude towards it, and his relationship with some of the key figures in India at the time. Finally an attempt will be made to analyse what he achieved during the tenure of his appointment.

British power in India

Whilst it is not necessary to outline in detail the history of British influence in India, a brief outline of the machinery of government will prove useful in terms of understanding the situation in which Brackenbury found himself. British power in India was initially developed, not by the British Government, but by the Honourable East India Company. It was only after the Indian Mutiny in 1858 that control of India passed to Her Majesty's Government. Rather than the 24 strong Court of Directors of the East India Company, India was to be governed by a Governor-General, commonly

known as the Viceroy, who was in turn responsible to the Secretary of State for India who as a member of the British Government was responsible to both the Cabinet and Parliament. A council, whose members were chosen by the British government, advised the Governor-General. The Governor General, himself chosen by the British government, had the theoretical power to overrule the council, but it was seldom used.¹ The members of the council served for a fixed five-year period, and this was why Brackenbury spent only five years in India as the military representative on the council. More will be said about the status of his position later.

The Military in India

A single Indian Army did not strictly exist until 1895. Before that date four main forces made up the available military strength; the three Presidency Armies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras, and the Punjab Frontier Force. Each Army had its own Commander-in-Chief, and in practice the Commander-in-Chief of the Bengal Army was also Commander-in-Chief India. The military system in India had an unnecessarily complex organisation. The Punjab Frontier Force, for example, was actually under the control of the Government of India, not the Commander-in-Chief. As a result if the army Commander in the Punjab wanted to move an element of the force from its current deployment he had to ask the Commander-in-Chief India. He in turn had to ask the Governor-General, who then had to tell the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab to order the Commander of the Frontier force to do what it was he had wanted to do in the first place.

The Commander-in-Chief in India played an important part in Brackenbury's time there. He was usually an officer of General rank taken from the British Army; very few came from the Indian Army.² Yet despite being a British Army officer he was

not subordinate to the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. The Secretary of State for India appointed him, although normally with the recommendation or support of the Governor-General. More will be said of the Commander-in-Chief later when looking at the relationship between him and the Military Member of the Council.

‘The Great Game’

One of the major imperial concerns, in some cases bordering on obsession, of this period was the threat of a Russian invasion of India through Afghanistan and the northwest frontier. These anxieties started when the Russians began to fight their way down through the Caucasus, thereby expanding the Russian empire in Central Asia. In 1865 Tashkent fell to the Russians, followed by Samarkand and Bokhara in 1886, and in 1873 Khiva. Peter Hopkirk writes that:

As the gap between the two front lines gradually narrowed, the great Game intensified. Despite the dangers, principally from hostile rulers, there was no shortage of intrepid young officers eager to risk their lives beyond the frontier,..³

The Cold War that this created was commonly referred to as the ‘Great Game’. There is some doubt as to who first used the phrase, but the term the ‘Great Game’ was popularised by Rudyard Kipling in his novel ‘Kim’.

A great deal of the ‘game’ was played out in Afghanistan, the country that lay between the two expanding Empires. Between 1839 and 1842 Britain had first ventured into Afghanistan and fought the first Afghan War.⁴ Although the details of the war need not concern us here, it has to be stated that the war was a disaster. Of the initial force of 4,500 British and Indian troops and 12,000 camp followers, only one European made it back through his own means. Pride was partially restored during General Robert Sale’s defence of Jellalabad. Not only did they lift the siege by themselves, but they also defeated the main Afghan Army.

Events took a significant turn in 1878 when the Russians signed a treaty with Amir Sher Ali, whilst at the same time refusing to hear representations from British officials. The possibility of Russian troops being based in Afghanistan, and training an Afghan Army in European methods, was unthinkable to the British, some of whom thought it a prelude to invasion. The response was a British invasion force of three columns, totalling 35,000 men and 144 guns, being sent into Afghanistan. This action was ultimately a complete success, although there were a few setbacks along the way. Frederick Sleigh Roberts, later Lord Roberts, came to fame during this campaign for his defeat of a numerically superior force by use of guile and cunning. This was the making of his reputation and special mention is made of it here because he was Commander-in-Chief in India during the first two years of Brackenbury's appointment there.

As a result of the invasion the treaty of Gandamak was signed on 26th May 1879. This stated that the Afghans would agree to live, "... in perfect peace and friendship",⁵ with the British, as well as ceding Kurram Pishin and Sibi to Britain. Sher Ali was replaced by Yakub Khan as Amir. There were other elements to this treaty, such as the establishment of a permanent residency in Kabul, an agreement to allow British subjects to trade freely in Afghanistan, the building of a telegraph line from Kabul to India, and the stipulation that Britain would control the foreign policy of Afghanistan, thus making sure that Russian influence was officially kept to a minimum. With the signing of this treaty the British thought hostilities were over, and consequently most of the Army left. Only a small force under Roberts remained to control the newly acquired provinces.

This force became vital when in September 1879 Afghan soldiers mutinied and supported a mob in attacking the British Residency in Kabul, killing the Resident and his staff. Roberts was reinforced and his force was renamed the Kabul Field Force and ordered to advance on that town. After bitter fighting Kabul fell and Yakub Khan was replaced by Abdul al-Rahaman. However, another Afghan Prince, Ayub Khan, had started a popular uprising in Kandahar supported by many of the old regiments of Sher Ali's Army. The British force in Kandahar supported the local ruler, the Wali, and along with his forces set out to stop Ayub Khan. The British and the Wali were defeated at the battle of Maiwand and retreated to Kandahar where they were besieged. It was Roberts again who came to the rescue and added to his growing reputation by relieving Kandahar and defeating the Afghan Army. As a result of this war the Amir Abdul al-Rahaman agreed to have no dealings with the Russians, as a show of gratitude for Britain's support. In return the British agreed to abandon the idea of a permanent residency in Kabul, and by May 1881 the British and Indian troops had withdrawn.

Despite all this the fear of Russian expansion into Afghanistan did not go away. In March 1885 Russian and Afghan troops clashed at the border town of Pendjeh. In India the fear spread that Russia would use this as a pretext for an invasion of Afghanistan and that then it would only be a matter of time before India was threatened. In Britain the incident was used by Gladstone and the Liberal government as an excuse to withdraw British troops from the Sudan in the wake of the embarrassment of Gordon's death at Khartoum.⁶ In India, the Governor-General, Lord Dufferin, assured the Amir of Afghanistan that if Russia attacked Herat, which was near the border, it would be met by a British declaration of war.⁷ It must be added that the Afghans treated the Russians with the same suspicion as the British. British

involvement in Afghanistan had proved costly, in terms of lives, money and prestige. There was little prospect of financial gain there and the lengths to which the British had gone further illustrate the magnitude of the threat that was perceived to be posed by the Russians. Sometimes British involvement in Afghanistan was renewed to restore the prestige that a military defeat in that country had cost but more often than not it was designed to keep Russia out and to create a buffer between Russian territory and India. Nothing ever came of this 'Cold War' but as Brackenbury arrived in India tensions had risen yet again⁸.

Military Member of the Council of the Viceroy of India

Brackenbury had been to India before, having served as part of the reinforcements sent there following the Indian Mutiny.⁹ Later he had briefly held an appointment as Private Secretary to Lord Lytton, then Governor-General, but on the latter's resignation returned home with him after only a few months.¹⁰ Obviously this was not enough time for him to gain any meaningful experience of India but it did mean that, when he arrived in 1891, he was at least familiar with some of the structures and workings of its government. It also meant that he had some knowledge of how the Governor-General operated, and as his appointment was to be in effect the military representative on the Governor-General's council, this would have proved useful. Given his reputation for organisation it would be very surprising if he had not done preparatory work before embarking for India.

The position that Brackenbury held had something of an ambiguous nature. The Commander-in-Chief was perceived as being junior only to the Governor-General. However the Commander-in-Chief in India worked very differently to the Commander-in-Chief in Britain.¹¹ In Britain the job of the Commander-in-Chief

was to put an army in the field and to make sure it was fully supplied and maintained. He also had responsibility for its discipline. In India the Commander-in-Chief was expected to take the field with the Army, and the responsibility for supply, organisation and maintaining the army fell upon the Military Department, headed by the Military Member of the Viceroy's Council. This department was in charge of what would commonly be called the 'support services'. Byron Farwell lists its responsibilities as "... military administration, medical stores, supply, transportation, clothing, remounts, military works and military finance".¹² This left the Commander-in-Chief to concentrate on training, discipline and maintaining combat readiness. In practical terms it was actually an efficient division of powers and was in theory a much better system than the one found at home. As the Indian Army spent most of its time involved in one campaign or another this allowed the Commander-in-Chief to concentrate on combat matters without being snowed under by administration.¹³ The system worked well when the Commander-in-Chief was someone who had served in India for a long time and was used to it. It was when the Commander-in-Chief came from a mainly British Army background that problems arose, because it was likely he would want to be a Commander-in-Chief in the British style. This was particularly true when Lord Kitchener arrived as Commander-in-Chief in 1902. He came to India wanting to overhaul the Indian Army to incorporate the lessons of the South African War and because he too feared imminent Russian invasion. He had been used to total control, especially when he had commanded the Egyptian Army, and found it impossible to accept the status of the Military Member. He felt his reforms were hampered by the powers of the Military Member and concluded that "... he would have found it easier to accomplish his mission if he had come to India as military member of council instead of as Commander-in-Chief". Although an exaggeration it

does illustrate the not inconsiderable powers of the position Brackenbury occupied.

It is important to underline the differing roles played by the two positions in the governance of India. The Military Department:

...enjoyed a watching brief over expenditure, and its head served as the channel of communication between the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief. Because he was expected to advise the civilian Viceroy upon broad aspects of military policy, the Military Member of the Council was entitled to criticise freely the plans and projects of the Commander-in-Chief.¹⁴

To someone like Kitchener the idea that anyone, let alone someone who was of junior military rank, could freely criticise his plans to the Government of India would have been totally unacceptable. To Lord Roberts, who served as Commander-in-Chief from 1885-1893, there never seemed to be such a problem. This was perhaps a consequence of the perception of Roberts as the foremost military expert on India, and certainly it was likely to be a brave man who would dare to criticise him. As a result of Kitchener's complaints about the Military Member a committee of inquiry was set up. Two members of this committee defended the current position, namely Lord Roberts and Sir George White.¹⁵ White had followed Roberts, and was the other Commander-in-Chief with whom Brackenbury had worked. Roberts and White were regarded as two of the most successful Commanders-in-Chief and the fact that they supported the current system contradicted Kitchener's assertion that it made it impossible for the Commander-in-Chief to achieve anything.

Although the Military Member was always a serving military officer he held a civilian appointment and worked on a civilian council, and a precedent had been established that he did not wear uniform in his official capacity. Some had been known to wear it on social occasions, but General Sir George Barrow wrote that he never once saw Brackenbury in his uniform the entire time he was in India.¹⁶ Brackenbury's own

view was that,

I only wear uniform when other members of the council wear it. On state occasions I have always refused to inspect troops or to take salutes on parades in uniform, in order to mark the fact that I am here in a civil and not a military capacity.¹⁷

The fact that Major-General Sir Edmond Elles wore his uniform to council meetings was a further source of annoyance to Kitchener. The Military Member sat in on all meetings of the Governing Council regardless of whether military matters were being discussed or not, and had full voting rights. The Commander-in-Chief only sat in on meetings when military matters were being discussed but even then he had no vote. In light of all this the indignation that Kitchener felt is perhaps understandable. The idea that a junior officer could sit on a civilian council, in a civilian position, wearing military uniform, and criticise and vote against his proposals understandably caused him some consternation. Brackenbury's decision not to wear uniform at all illustrates the tact that he brought to the position. He had previously served as Chief of Police in both Cyprus and Ireland, although he had disliked these appointments, and as both of these were in effect civilian positions he did have some relevant experience outside military circles, which undoubtedly helped him in the sub-continent.

The Military Member of the Council was usually selected for his knowledge of Indian military affairs. All the members of the council were selected for their expertise in a particular area. It was felt that with Brackenbury's record as an administrator, and Roberts expert knowledge, that this did not matter in his case. Not being an expert on Indian matters, although he could never be called ignorant of the subject, resulted in him remaining quiet on most of the Commander-in-Chief's proposals.¹⁸ It was only when he thought he could add something to the debate, as a result of his experience elsewhere, that he used his privilege to pass comment and criticise the

proposals of the Commander-in-Chief.

Brackenbury and Roberts

During the first two years of Brackenbury's service in India Sir Frederick Sleigh Roberts, who became Lord Roberts in 1892, was Commander-in-Chief. Despite the fact that Brackenbury was a founder member of the rival 'ring' of Lord Wolseley there appears to be nothing but mutual respect and admiration between the two. It would not have been surprising if Roberts had viewed Brackenbury as a threat, given that he was widely regarded as Wolseley's protégé. This perhaps goes to show that the rivalry between the two 'rings' was not as strong as is sometimes suggested. In fact Roberts actually used Brackenbury's links with the Wolseley 'ring' to try and change a decision. In 1890 Wolseley, then Adjutant-General, had passed an ordnance that would have seen all officers holding certain positions promoted to Major-General. Every eligible officer in Britain and the colonies received this promotion but none of the eligible officers in India did. John Lee wrote that "This was the most blatant piece of 'African' preferment in the ongoing 'war between the rings'". There is no doubt that Roberts saw it as such.¹⁹ Roberts had written continually complaining of the injustice but to no avail. In August 1891 he asked for Brackenbury's support in trying to change the decision. He specifically asked for help over Ian Hamilton's promotion, knowing the high regard Brackenbury held him in after their service together in the Sudan, but Brackenbury said he was willing to fight for all of them. He then wrote, not only officially, as Roberts had done, but also privately to Redvers Buller, another of the Wolseley 'ring', who by this time had succeeded Wolseley as Adjutant-General at the War Office.²⁰ Eventually the promotions were obtained, which probably had more to do with the Secretary of State

for India's intervention than Brackenbury's. However this is another example of the strength of the relationship between the two, if only for the fact that Roberts was prepared to ask Brackenbury for help. This and his willingness to help again casts doubt on the strength of the rivalry between the 'rings' in the British Army, and shows a growing relationship between the two men.

This view is further supported by correspondence between Sir Redvers Buller and Brackenbury in May 1894. Buller had written to Brackenbury complaining of Roberts selecting certain 'favoured' officers. Brackenbury replied that the same was said of them regarding the 'Wolseley gang' saying, "Any Commander will want the men whom he has tried and found never to fail him, and will prefer them to those he has not tried". He then went on to quote Roberts, "I think Wolseley has always been perfectly right. He has a great eye for selecting men and he goes on selecting the best out of his previous selections".²¹ Whilst this does not have too much to do with Brackenbury's time in India, it does focus on the much wider issue of his involvement with the two competing 'rings' within the army. He never complained of feeling sidelined or in any way unwanted in India because of his association with Wolseley. The relationship he had with Roberts perhaps illustrates both that the rivalry was not as aggressive as had been supposed and that Brackenbury's ability outweighed any rivalry.

In fact their good relationship was nothing new, as two events serve to illustrate. In a letter to the Governor-General in October 1886 Roberts discusses appointments in the Indian Army, in particular the possibility of his needing a new Chief-of-Staff and proposed that "General Brackenbury is, I believe, the officer best fitted for such an important position".²² At that time Brackenbury was serving as Head of the

Intelligence Branch at the War Office. This is perhaps related to events that had happened some months prior to Roberts letter. When Brackenbury had returned from Egypt in August 1885 he had been promoted to Major-General but had also been put on half-pay. He himself records the reasons for this.

I doubt if it is realised by the public generally how great are the difficulties of a military career to an officer who is not possessed of private means. It would have been impossible for me to take a Major-General's command at home or in the colonies, involving as it would have done furnishing a large house, buying horses and carriages, and setting up an expensive establishment for a maximum period of five years. My only chance was India.²³

The expenses of such an appointment were far less in India and so Brackenbury appealed to Roberts for a command there. For his part Roberts was only too pleased to try and obtain the services of an officer who had already made quite a name for himself, and along with his good record for management and organisation, had just returned from leading a column in the field. However Roberts was unable to obtain the appointment and within a few months Brackenbury was Head of the Intelligence Branch. Brackenbury believed he failed to get the position, despite Roberts help, because "...the vacancy was wanted for someone else", and that Roberts, "... kind efforts were in vain". The real reason seems to be that there was a fear that Roberts, as an ex-artillery man, was filling all the positions in India with 'gunners'.²⁴ At that time Charles Arbuthnot, Edward Francis Chapman, Edwin Hayter Collen, and George Pretymen, amongst others, were all ex-artillery men holding commands in India.

Bryan Robson, in his edition of the Roberts papers thought that "Roberts clearly regarded some of his (Brackenbury's) views as unsound and found him less congenial than Chesney and his predecessors".²⁵ He gives no evidence for this judgement, and there seems little to substantiate it. There is no doubt that the two men had differences of opinion, especially when it came to the 'Russian menace'. Brackenbury

thought that Russian preparations were a bluff and in this he was supported by the reports of the Intelligence Branch in London but, either because he did not think it his place or because he thought Roberts was too set in his ways, he quickly stopped trying to convince him. When Sir George White succeeded Roberts, Brackenbury made a point of sending him all the material on Russia that he was being supplied with by Grierson.²⁶ Roberts and Brackenbury also differed on the value and spread of education in the Army. Brackenbury had initially felt that Roberts might be against his appointment and had written to him, "I know that you would rather the post had been given to another man, but none the less I do feel quite confident that you will give me every possible help in carrying out the duties devolving upon me".²⁷ Roberts replied that he had no objection. It appears that any objections Roberts might have had were due to his preference for a man with more experience of India, rather than fearing any major clashes over policy with Brackenbury. However, there is no doubt that they had differences of opinion; they came from two completely different military backgrounds. Yet there is no evidence of any animosity between them and they worked well together. If anything, it could be argued that it was the different backgrounds of the two men that was the basis of a very good partnership.²⁸

In July 1892, with preparations starting to be made for the departure of Lord Roberts, the Governor-General Lord Lansdowne, considered the "advantage of the present combination being that Lord Roberts possesses a special knowledge of India and the Indian Army, while General Brackenbury has considerable experience outside India, and knowledge of the views held at home".²⁹ A good example of this is found in correspondence between Roberts and Brackenbury in July 1891. Roberts wanted to obtain permission from the War Office in London to convert field artillery batteries into horse artillery batteries.³⁰ Brackenbury responded "Knowing, as I do, that more

field batteries and not more horse artillery are wanted for the home mobilisation scheme, I do not think there would be the slightest chance of getting War Office approval". As a result the matter was dropped, preventing any chance of a clash between the British and Indian army and the chance of any further antipathy being created. Lansdowne hoped that a similar relationship could be maintained with Lord Roberts successor, an appointment upon which Brackenbury, when asked for his opinion, said, "I know of only one officer in either the British or the Indian Army of at all sufficient standing, who possesses all the qualities required in Lord Roberts successor. That officer is Major-General Sir George White".³¹ It was, in fact, White who succeeded Roberts in 1893 and Brackenbury continued a similarly cordial relationship with him.

Brackenbury's part in military reorganisation

If one wants to find any lasting impact made by Brackenbury in India perhaps one of the easiest ways is to look at his role in the reorganisation of the Indian Army under one command. A scheme for such a reorganisation had been floating around for many years. Yet it was during Brackenbury's time in India that it was actually put in place. The major problem with achieving reorganisation had been the division of powers that existed in India at that time. Reorganisation needed the cooperation of the Governor-General, the Commander-in-Chief and the Military Member. It was only now in the cordial atmosphere that existed between Roberts and Brackenbury and with the willingness of the Governor-General to trust their advice, that the circumstances were right for reform. T. A. Heathcote supports the view that it was the influence of Roberts and Brackenbury together that made it possible to revive the old proposals.³² As a result the posts of Commander-in-Chief of Madras and Bombay

were abolished and, although the army was split into four regional commands, it was now united formally under one Commander-in-Chief. This also had the effect of further expanding the Military Department. "With the centralising of the army administration... and the abolition of the presidential C-in-C's and military departments in 1895, the Military Department had grown in responsibilities, importance, and power", and therefore so had the Military Member.³³

Brackenbury also helped in the development of the Intelligence Department of the Indian Army, which had been created in 1890. His experiences at the War Office proved useful here. In a detailed letter to Roberts he outlined the best ways for Intelligence to be carried out and the sort of men who were best suited for this type of work. He believed that a good Intelligence Branch could be obtained for 50,000 rupees a year. The Accountant General thought this too much but Brackenbury assured him, "it will be money well spent if it gives us a really good working Intelligence Department".³⁴ Brackenbury wanted the branch to be seen as a stepping-stone to advancement, thus encouraging the brightest and best of the Indian Army to join it. The branch was duly established under Lieutenant-Colonel Edmond Elles. There is evidence of a great deal of correspondence between the two on Intelligence matters. Elles appears to have been one of the Indian Army officers who panicked over potential Russian invasion. He believed that Russia was planning a double strike against India and China. Brackenbury told him that the Intelligence Branch in London had no evidence to support such ideas and warned Elles, "Avoid being an alarmist. There is an immense improvement in this respect in the Intelligence Branch summaries of late". In his correspondence with Brackenbury, Elles does come across as an alarmist, at one point advocating attacking the Afghan army and occupying the country to forestall Russian advancement.³⁵

In some ways his time in India was a good preparation for what he would experience as Director General of Ordnance during the South African War. Here he came across what could be termed false economies which were damaging the military machine. In a letter to Lord Roberts, dated 16th May 1891, he highlighted such an issue regarding remounts for cavalry and artillery regiments. Horses were being sent out that were not fit for service for another year for reasons of age or conditioning. This was done largely to save money by keeping the horses a year less at the depots and allowing new ones to be stored there in preparation for future remounts. Brackenbury felt that:

Surely it is a false economy to have on the strength of regiments and batteries horses which are not fit for active service. We cannot ensure that our enemies will suit our convenience and wait till the horses have had a year to mature, and if they did, we should have to fill up casualties that had occurred during that year with immature remounts.³⁶

Whilst Brackenbury had undoubtedly come across similar problems in his career he was now in a position to do something about it and the situation was changed so that remounts were not dispatched until a year later.

Another key concern of Brackenbury's and "The point to which I first turned my office", was the preparation of what would in modern military language be called a rapid reaction force. His plan was to prepare a force of 35,000 men that could be placed in the field as and when required. One key aim of this force was to meet any possible Russian invasion of Afghanistan, but Brackenbury admitted that its use was almost universal. He knew that similar ideas had been considered before but nothing had been done. Not only did Brackenbury bring his organisational skills to the problem but he also obtained the support of the Finance Minister of the Government of India, Sir David Barham. As he wrote:

The troops are told off, the commanders and staff named, railway time tables are being prepared and are nearly complete. But this is only the paper work. The solid preparation is going on rapidly.

Under Brackenbury's instructions, "All the stores, commissariat, ordnance, medical, veterinary, engineering, required for rapid advance are being prepared".³⁷ Such planning would have been easier for him than that which he had attempted whilst at the Intelligence Branch. In India he had more of a free hand, partly due to the seniority of his position but also because of the different nature of the relationship between military and civilian authority within India. The planning details were impressive even down to the creation of reserve railway lines in case, for whatever reason, existing ones could not be used. Such administrative duties, whilst disliked by most officers, were 'exciting' to Brackenbury. "The administration of this great Indian Army is a task of immense interest to me".³⁸ With this basic plan in place he started to work on expanding it. By April 1893 he was writing that, "Our mobilisation scheme for putting four divisions, about 70,000 men and line of communication troops upon the North West Frontier is thoroughly practical and has been worked out in every detail, and is constantly kept up to date".³⁹ Moreover, because of the level of control he had he was able to have all the non-perishable stores for this force collected and available at advanced points.

Brackenbury and the 'Russian Menace'

As we saw in the previous chapter, the Russian threat was nothing new to him. His time in intelligence gave him significant background knowledge of the subject whilst also keeping him aloof from the situation in India. He therefore entered India without any of that obsessive fear of Russian invasion that seemed to grip all those who served there. Indeed, he urged the Governor-General, Lord Lansdowne to "doubt the wisdom of leading the Afghans and the people of India to suppose that we are afraid

of being attacked on this side of the Indus by the Russian”.⁴⁰ His knowledge of the wider picture brought an element of realism to the invasion scare. This was an alternative viewpoint that Lansdowne appreciated. “The touch with Eastern affairs that I got in my five years in the Intelligence Department is invaluable to me here; and the Viceroy is good enough to keep me in touch by sending me personally early copies of telegrams, and consulting me on questions that arise with Russia, China and Siam”.⁴¹

It was whilst he had been Head of the Intelligence Branch that he and Major-General Newmarch, then Military Secretary at the India Office, had been asked to write a memorandum for the Cabinet on troop deployment and the disposition of a field force in India after troops had been provided for garrisons.⁴² It is interesting to note that at the meeting at which the memorandum was agreed upon only two members had served in India for any period of time, namely Sir Donald Stewart and Major-General Newmarch. Yet rather than take the advice from India for discussion by the cabinet, it was this report alone that formed the basis of the debate. To an extent this serves to illustrate the suspicion that existed in Britain that the Indian government and military tended to panic about a possible invasion and their belief that more troops, and in particular British ones, were needed to successfully defend and garrison the country.

The memorandum itself makes interesting reading on the dangers faced within India. "We believe that the conditions now obtaining in India are so different from those which obtained at the time of the mutiny, that a serious military revolt is no longer within the region of probability".⁴³ This is an interesting comment when it is remembered that the troops in India were still dispersed under schemes designed after the Mutiny to guard against a repeat. Until the reorganisation of 1895 troops were

scattered throughout India and every major city had its own garrison. "This made it difficult to assemble troops in large numbers for exercise and the formation staffs had little opportunity of training for their active service duties".⁴⁴ Brackenbury and Newmarch made the point that if the conditions of the Mutiny era no longer existed then thousands of troops could be used in a field force in the event of any invasion, thus negating to an extent the need for reinforcements from Britain to guard against such an attack. The memorandum goes on,

"But we consider that, in the event of the approach of Russian troops to the frontiers of India, or in the event of any serious disaster to the Army of India in the field beyond the frontiers, a state of things might arise which would demand the presence of strong garrisons".⁴⁵

This is an interesting insight. One of the reasons for the dispersal of troops throughout India was the hope that any future mutiny could be isolated to one area and therefore more easily dealt with. The fear was no longer simply of a mutiny in the Indian Army, but the possibility of revolt amongst the general populace. Roberts held this view and "... he expected 'grave unrest' the moment the Russians entered Kabul, with worse to follow if they advanced any further".⁴⁶

The idea of Indian revolt in the event of war with Russia began to gain support throughout British India and the Russians helped to build this fear. The Russian Colonel Terentiev wrote a book 'Russia and England in the struggle for the Markets of Central Asia', which was translated into English. "It was designed to make the flesh creep, with the prophecy that if Russia ever mounted a serious military challenge to the Raj, the Indian Army would turn on its masters and the masses would follow suit".⁴⁷ That this view was widely held amongst the Russians is evidenced by the testimony of Captain Ralph Cobbold, who was told at a dinner with Russian officers that "...the Cossack would prove no match for the Sepoy who, when put to the test,

would refuse to fight for his rulers".⁴⁸ The military themselves had doubts over the

Indian Army's ability, if not necessarily its willingness, to defeat the Russians. In a rare instance of agreement, both Lord Wolseley and Lord Roberts concluded that the Indian Army would struggle against the Russians. In August 1889 Wolseley wrote in response to the memorandum from Brackenbury and Newmarch that he had seen a lot of the Russian Army in 1883, and that to pit 'native troops' against them, "and risk our hold on India on the issue, would be, according to my notions, a mad crime."⁴⁹ His arch rival wrote similarly in March 1890:

"I have no hesitation in stating that except the Gurkhas, Dogrras, Sikhs, the pick of the Punjabi Muhammadans, Hindustanis of the Jay and Ranghur castes (Such as enlist in our Cavalry) and certain classes of Pathans, there are no Native soldiers in our service whom we could venture in safety to place in the field against the Russian... I should be sorry to find myself in front of a European foe unless my forces were composed of as many Europeans as Natives".⁵⁰

These comments were all perhaps a little unfair. The Indian Army had faced the Afghans and Pathan tribesmen with distinction. Whilst the Russians might have more modern equipment they would not match the ferocity of the Indian Army's previous enemies. The anxiety remained in India that the Indian Army would need reinforcing from Britain. However there was a real possibility that British reinforcements might not be available. In 1887 Lord Stanhope, the Secretary of State for War, responded to a despatch from the Government of India:

"It is evidently far from improbable that the same circumstances which necessitated a mobilisation in India might also render it impossible for this country to part with any considerable portion of the small number of regular troops in the United Kingdom".⁵¹

Stanhope, therefore, implored the Government of India not to calculate

reinforcements into any scheme they planned to undertake in the event of war with Russia.

There were many supporters of the so called 'forward' school of thought that wanted to pre-empt any Russian invasion and safeguard India by pushing as far into Central Asia as possible, a view which Brackenbury said, "is one which my judgement condemns as thoroughly unsound".⁵² They wanted Britain to secure Kandahar, Kabul and even Herat on the Persian border, as fortresses to stop any Russian invasion. Although not one of the 'forward' school, Brackenbury held the view "that we can never allow Russian troops to occupy or enter either Kabul or Kandahar, and that we must defend the Kabul-Kandahar alignment".⁵³ Much of his work for a time revolved around the strengthening of garrisons and communications on the Northwest Frontier. In particular he was concerned that there must be a sufficiently good road through the Peshawar Valley to Chitral and that this must be "maintained, protected and renewed".⁵⁴ This would make any response to a Russian invasion much more efficient and effective, without going to the extreme, and costly option, put forward by the forward school. The probability of a speedy British response to any invasion might again help to deter the Russians.

Whilst knowing that it was his job to try and plan for every eventuality, it is clear that Brackenbury had grave doubts about the prospect of a Russian invasion. In a memorandum of August 1889 he wrote, "the Field Force, as distinct from the local or garrison troops, which Russia now has in Transcaspia and Turkestan, is about 34,000 men, 6,500 horses, and 80 guns". This was hardly an invasion force, even if the Russians envisaged support from Afghanistan and a popular uprising in India itself, especially when it is remembered that some of this force would have had to be used to

secure the lines of communication, which would have left a field army of approximately 20,000 men. Moreover, any force would have to be supplied through inhospitable country. Obviously there was the possibility of additional troops but Brackenbury was not sure of the likelihood of this. "The numbers by which this army could be reinforced must necessarily depend upon the attitude of other powers whenever Russia and Great Britain may find themselves at war".⁵⁵ Almost certainly as a result of his time as Head of the Intelligence Branch, Brackenbury was able to see the broader picture that was perhaps not as clear to those in office in India with more parochial views. Much had been written on Russia within the Intelligence Branch whilst he had been its head, in particular 'Russia's power to concentrate troops in Central Asia', and Captain J. Wolfe Murray's 'Military operations in the event of war with Russia', although the latter was actually published just a few months after Brackenbury had left the branch. Again this shows that although he had never previously served in India for any length of time, he did have substantial knowledge of the major issues. Wolfe Murray's report talked of the inevitability of a war between Russia and Britain expanding into a much broader conflict.⁵⁶ He noted the importance of Turkey and discussed the possible scenarios of Turkey being either friend, foe or neutral. This report also considered the likelihood of French support for Russia and in a way, foretold the Franco-Russian Military Convention signed two years later. This was nothing new to Brackenbury as in August 1886 he had revealed to the Cabinet the existence of Russian plans to attack India and discussed the possibility of a Franco-Russian alliance, and its anti-British purpose.⁵⁷

This was one of the reasons why Brackenbury supported the view that Indian preparations for invasion had to concentrate solely on troops already in India. Even if troops could be found from the British Army to send to India, there was a real

possibility that their arrival could be delayed until the Royal Navy had achieved supremacy at sea. Brackenbury knew that if this meant war with the French and Russian Navy combined it could take some time before such supremacy could be achieved. He also wrote, in 1891, of the vital role that the Turkish Empire would play in any conflict, supporting the view of Wolfe Murray. Presuming that only Turkey joined Britain in war against Russia, he could not see Russia moving troops to Central Asia.

In that case we should only have to deal with the forces present in Trans-Caspia and Turkestan. These, inclusive of all local troops, amount to about 50,000, and, as Russia must guard her Chinese and Persian frontiers, and cannot, any more than ourselves, disperse with obligatory garrisons, I estimate the forces available for operations in Afghanistan at not more than 30,000; and I cannot but think that the 30,000 British and 70,000 Native troops, which the Commander-in-Chief admits to be available, would be sufficient to hold the lines of communication and the Kabul-Kandahar alignment against such portion of these 30,000 men as would (for Russia also would have communications to defend) reach that alignment.⁵⁸

In fact, on the 27th June 1892, he went further: "...in the event of the war becoming general, it is, in my opinion, certain that Russia would withdraw, rather than reinforce, her troops in Central Asia".⁵⁹ Whilst we can never know how accurate Brackenbury was on these matters, the fact that there was no Russian invasion does lend weight to his argument. His knowledge and experience would have also strengthened his case. There were several periods during this 'cold war' when, if Russia had the ability to invade, the conditions would have been right to do so. Perhaps the most obvious moments would have been after the last Afghan War, the Gordon relief expedition, and perhaps most notably the South African War. This has to be seen as one of Brackenbury's most significant contributions during his time in India. There were too many who saw a Russian invasion of India purely in that context, as a straight fight between the two powers, and were blinded by an Indo-centric view. Brackenbury

brought knowledge of affairs outside of India that was invaluable. Some in India would have been aware of potential allies that Britain would have in a war with Russia but Brackenbury not only knew this but was also aware of the likelihood of these powers joining Britain in any conflict. It must be remembered that a much of Brackenbury's early work at the Intelligence Branch was concerned with the construction of mobilisation plans and the defence of Great Britain. Being the strategist and administrator he was, he will have looked at who these plans were being prepared against and who were potential allies. In terms of home defence the greatest threat was France, and France's strengthening relationship with Russia might cause further problems for Britain.

Whilst Britain had no formal alliances the practicalities of international relations would mean that they would soon have found some in the event of a Franco-Russian war against Britain. Both Brackenbury and Roberts had agreed that the next major war was likely to be one "in which France and Russia would be engaged on the one side, and the Triple Alliance and Great Britain on the other side".⁶⁰ Indeed this was the predominant view in the British Army for many years to come. In Brackenbury's own experiences there was evidence to suggest the likelihood of the Triple Alliance supporting Britain. Whilst he was at the Intelligence Branch he would have been aware of the negotiations with Austria, when Britain and Austria joined forces to prevent an enlarged Bulgaria becoming a puppet state of Russia.⁶¹ Keeping Russia in check was not only in Britain's interest. This may well have played an important part in leading Brackenbury to the conclusion that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a likely ally if Russia invaded India and initiated a wider war. Their support would bring with it Italian, and more importantly, German support under the terms of the

Triple Alliance. The writings and thinking of many in the military, and in particular Brackenbury, over the British position in the European Alliance system are fascinating, especially in light of what we know happened in 1914. Whilst Turkey had its problems with Britain they were also aware that, in their war with Russia in 1877-1878, it had only been the presence of the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet in the Dardanelles and Disraeli's threat to use it, that had halted the Russian Army on the outskirts of Constantinople. If war was fought along these lines then the Russians would be able to support their troops in Central Asia. In fact, the opposite was more likely. With German and Austro-Hungarian armies on her borders, and a possible Anglo-Turkish attack through the Black Sea, Russia would want to recall troops from Central Asia, especially given that these were some of their most experienced soldiers. Although all this goes beyond Brackenbury's role in India that is in itself a pertinent point. At this time there was no planning for imperial defence, and thus it was almost inevitable that Indian planning would be devoid of any wider thoughts of strategy. Indeed, there were no formal links for cooperation between the British and Indian armies and indeed an air of distrust and suspicion existed between the two. Whilst Brackenbury's responsibility for planning only encompassed India it was inevitable that his views would be influenced by his wider knowledge, especially that gained from his time in intelligence. His former colleagues in the Branch were still, of course, supplying him with material. One such report, received from Grierson, led him to comment:

What he (Grierson) says as to Russia's attention being directed westwards not eastwards is quite correct. But I find it difficult to get officers who have passed their lives in India to look beyond their own margins. Russia's whole present aim in the east is to keep us constantly guessing, and to so alarm us by her intrigues and her military demonstrations as to make us believe we cannot spare a man from India to act against her farther west; and she has effectually succeeded.⁶²

Whilst there were many Russian generals who advocated an invasion of India, and some even drew up plans, these were more often than not just 'war games'. Even the highly rated General Alexei Kuropatkin, who later lost some of his reputation in the Russo-Japanese War, joined in the hysteria and asked for command of the invasion force. The practicalities of the scheme were always likely to make it a non-starter. To have been successful any invasion would have needed support from Afghanistan, if only the promise of free passage, which was unlikely as the Russians were as unpopular as the British in that country, together with a popular uprising in India on a far bigger scale than even the Indian Mutiny. The Russians would also have needed the support of the tribes in Russian-held Central Asia, and British Intelligence saw these as possible British allies. However despite, the difficulties at the Russian end, the main concern of the British was whether the Indian Army, and elements of the British Army stationed in India, could even deal with an invasion of 30,000 men and the elements of the British Army stationed in India. With the best of the Indian and British troops it was likely that the invasion could be dealt with. Yet one sees in the writings of those in the Government of India the fear that preoccupied many about putting 'native' troops up against Europeans. The British had beaten numerically superior native armies with fewer than the 30,000 Russian troops that could possibly have invaded. Such concerns were rather disparaging to the Indian Army who were not only trained along European lines, and commanded by European officers, but many of them came from societies with proud military heritages. It was also an army that was as experienced at warfare as any in the world as it had been involved in almost constant campaigning since the Mutiny. Whilst these campaigns may have been against inferior opponents they were not without their value, if only for the experience of being under fire in combat conditions. All the evidence suggested that

a Russian invasion was unlikely, and in any case would be repulsed, though Brackenbury believed that an invasion might be attempted if only as part of a much broader strategy in a conflict against Britain by Russian and France. He suggested that such an invasion might be used in the knowledge that it would tie down large numbers of troops and resources that could otherwise be employed elsewhere. It would have meant all of the Indian and British contingents in India staying there and therefore not being available for any other campaign.

Conclusion

In a letter dated 4th May 1895 Brackenbury wrote to his old friend Sir John Ardagh that: "I have entered upon my last year in India, and shall not be sorry when it is over. I am nearly worn out".⁶³ In similar vein he wrote to Sir Edward Markham: "It is by far the hardest work I have ever had, and I sometimes feel played out, and long for rest".⁶⁴ Brackenbury's 'workaholic' nature and his practice of regularly working into the early hours of the morning made it unsurprising that his four years up to that point had left him in such a condition. He had a demanding job, virtually controlling the entire administrative machine for the Indian Army. It must be remembered that the climate in the sub-continent was not conducive to the health of the average 'European'. As early as August 1893 he was complaining to Grierson about the effect it was having on his health. Whilst in India he experienced gout, sciatica and malaria. Despite this he seems to have enjoyed the work, and some of the privileges that went with the post.⁶⁵ Brackenbury left India in April 1896, as his appointment was for five years. His ability at organisation had quickly been put to good effect. Fresh from the drawing up of mobilisation plans at home, he set about reorganising those of the Indian Army. In September 1891 he wrote that he had been able to make the

mobilisation plans more efficient and reduce the cost "...without excluding anything the absence of which would delay taking the field".⁶⁶ He had also played a key part in the reorganisation of the command structure which also helped to streamline and strengthen the Indian Army. It is not too strong to say that the Indian Army was in better condition because of the time spent by Brackenbury in India. The whole system of supply, transport, communications, disposition and mobilisation had improved under his administration. He also brought useful knowledge of the strategic situation outside of India and his realisation that Russian invasion would be part of a much wider conflict between the great powers brought some much needed reality to the concerns of those in power there. Brackenbury showed that not only were there numerous problems with a Russian invasion but also that the size of such a force was not likely to be the horde of Russians streaming over the border that was the common misconception, and as an ex-head of the Intelligence Branch of the British Army, he took a keen interest in the setting up and development of the Indian Army's Intelligence Service.⁶⁷ He wrote at length to Roberts and Lord Lansdowne on the subject, giving advice that varied from how best to carry out intelligence gathering missions to the best sort of men for the job.

This highlights another interesting facet of Brackenbury's time in India. Although having a direct line of communication with the Governor-General, he continually writes to Roberts, and later Sir George White when he was Commander-in-Chief, before presenting his ideas to the Governor-General. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the success of the relationship between Commander-in-Chief and Military Member during these years. It perhaps reflects his respect for Roberts but may also be admission of his own relative lack of experience on Indian matters. The appointment of Military Member usually went to someone on the basis of their

knowledge on Indian issues. This obviously was not the case with Brackenbury, but the partnership worked well, as Lansdowne said, because of Roberts's expert knowledge of India, which made up for Brackenbury's limitations in this area, and Brackenbury's knowledge and experience of military and political matters outside of India. Brackenbury's skill as an administrator would have proved invaluable anywhere and his recent appointments commanding troops in Sudan and being in charge of the Intelligence Branch meant that he had very useful recent experience that was put to good effect in India.

In light of this his time in India has to be seen as a success. He returned with an increased reputation as a man with experience not just in Africa, Britain and the War Office, but now also India. There were few who had his all round experience. Perhaps the only other man in this period who ever achieved this was Lord Roberts himself. Brackenbury returned to England in 1896 and took up his new appointment as President of the Ordnance Committee, which stood him in good stead when, at the pinnacle of his career, he took on the appointment of director-General of the Ordnance, at a time when the South African War stretched the department to breaking point. There can be little doubt that his experience in the Military Department in India proved useful. By 1896 Brackenbury had served in two important administrative appointments. In each he had met with success. More importantly others had recognised that. As we have seen Lord Lansdowne had praised his work, and they had developed a close working and personal relationship. This was to prove important for Brackenbury's future prospects. Lansdowne's time as Viceroy ended in January 1894 and by June 1895 he had been appointed Secretary of State for War.

Notes

- ¹ Heathcote, T.A *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1822-1922* (Vancouver: David and Charles, 1974), p.20.
- ² Heathcote, T.A *The Indian Army*, pp.24-35.
- ³ Hopkirk, Peter *The Great Game* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.4-5.
- ⁴ For detail of Afghan Wars see Farwell, Byron *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1973). Gives concise and basic understanding of campaigns.
- ⁵ Farwell, Byron *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, p.205.
- ⁶ Farwell, Byron *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, pp.293-294.
- ⁷ Fergusson, Thomas. G *British Military Intelligence, 1870-1914* (Maryland: University Publications of America, 1984), p.79.
- ⁸ The best account of the 'Great Game' can be found in Hopkirk, Peter *The Great Game*.
- ⁹ Brackenbury had served as part of General Whitlock's Column that had captured the Banda and Kirwee prize-money. The distribution of this money amongst the column was delayed for many years by parliamentary debate. For further details see Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909), pp.15-16 and Robson, Brian 'The Banda and Kirwi Prize Money' *Soldiers of the Queen, Journal of the Victorian Military Society*, Issue 97 (June 1999).
- ¹⁰ See Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of my Spare Time*, pp.276-283, for details of that time and relationship with Lord Lytton.
- ¹¹ See Heathcote, T.A *The Indian Army*, pp.24-26, for detail of differences between British and Indian Commander-in-Chief's.
- ¹² Farwell, Byron *Armies of the Raj, 1858-1947* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), p.210.
- ¹³ For a list of the various campaigns, and basic details, fought after the mutiny and up to the end of the century, see Haythornthwaite, Philip *The Colonial Wars Source Book* (London: Caxton Editions, 2000), pp.109-116. This lists some thirty-one expeditions and campaign fought within the subcontinent during this period. Many were small campaigns on the Northwest frontier, but it was all valuable combat experience.
- ¹⁴ Magnus, Phillip *Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist*, p.201.
- ¹⁵ Farwell, Byron *Armies of the Raj 1858-1947*, pp.212-213.
- ¹⁶ Barrow, General Sir George *The Fire of Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1941), p.95.
- ¹⁷ Brackenbury to Brigadier-General Lance 31st December 1893, Brackenbury letter books Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ¹⁸ Even his time as Head of the Intelligence Branch at the War Office had not helped in his knowledge of India, as this was considered off limits. Responsibility for such intelligence was seen to lay with the Indian Army and authorities.
- ¹⁹ Lee, John A *Soldiers Life, General Sir Ian Hamilton 1853-1947* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 2000), pp.33-34.
- ²⁰ Brackenbury to Roberts, National Army Museum, Roberts Papers. R11/42.
- ²¹ Brackenbury to Buller 9th May 1894, Brackenbury letter books Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ²² Robson, Bryan (ed) *Roberts in India: The Military Papers of Field Marshal Lord Roberts 1876-1893* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993), p.354.
- ²³ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, pp.349-50.
- ²⁴ Speech at Royal Artillery Dinner for Lord Roberts, on 21st September 1892. Roberts Papers. National Army Museum.
- ²⁵ Robson, Bryan (ed) *Roberts in India: The Military Papers of Field Marshal Lord Roberts 1876-1893*, p.448n.
- ²⁶ Brackenbury to White 12th May 1893 Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich
- ²⁷ Brackenbury to Roberts and January 1891. Roberts Papers. National Army Museum
- ²⁸ Perhaps part of the reason for this is that Brackenbury was careful never to exceed his authority. An incident that illustrates this was when Brackenbury was asked by Colonel Charles Bromhead to help find employment for his brother Gonville Bromhead V.C, of Rorke's Drift fame. Brackenbury refused pointing out that all appointments were the responsibility of the CinC. Bromhead responded that a word from Brackenbury would help. Brackenbury still refused and later wrote, "Bromhead has a higher opinion of what a good word from me will do than I have!". Another interesting example was that Major Charles Townshend, who would later gain infamy in the campaign in Mesopotamia during the First World War, wrote to him asking for an appointment in the Intelligence Branch. Brackenbury not only told him he was unable to secure this, but that Townshend wasn't qualified for such a position. Brackenbury to Colonel C.J.Bromhead 15th October 1891 & Brackenbury to Sir Mortimer Durand 19th October 1891 & Brackenbury to Major C. Townshend 28th August 1895. All found in Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.

- ²⁹ Brackenbury's Own Memorandum on Correspondence with the Viceroy, 19th July 1892. British Library, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections. Mss. Eur. D.735, p.1-2.
- ³⁰ Brackenbury to Roberts 20th and 23rd July 1891. Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Woolwich. Permission was needed from London, as all artillery was part of the British Army on loan to the Indian Army. Technically the Indian Army possessed no artillery of its own.
- ³¹ Brackenbury's Own Memorandum on Correspondence with the Viceroy, 19th July 1892. British Library Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections. Mss. Eur. D. 735, p.2. Even back in October 1892 Brackenbury was recommending that White be the next Commander-in-Chief, despite at this time White still being a Major General. Brackenbury to Chapman 22 October 1892, Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ³² Heathcote, T.A *The Military in British India* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p.156.
- ³³ Brackenbury to Lansdowne 15th December 1893, Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich. Brackenbury had wanted Burma to form a separate fifth command. Brackenbury to Lansdowne 15th December 1893 Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ³⁴ Brackenbury to Roberts 2nd March 1892, Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ³⁵ This is the same Elles who as Military Member would clash with Kitchener and consequently be the last Military Member. Brackenbury to Elles 7th May 1892 Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum. Brackenbury to Elles 25th August 1892 Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich. Brackenbury replied that he thought negotiation and financial pressure would be more effective.
- ³⁶ Brackenbury to Roberts 16th May 1891, Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ³⁷ As the most likely deployment for such troops within India was to the north Brackenbury had got the agreement for extra railway sidings and communications to be created along the route, right to the edge of what is modern day Pakistan.
- ³⁸ Brackenbury to Sanderson 9th October 1891, Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ³⁹ Brackenbury to Herbert 24th April 1893, Brackenbury letter books Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ⁴⁰ Brackenbury to Lansdowne 2nd June 1891, Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ⁴¹ Brackenbury to Sanderson 9th October 1891, Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ⁴² Memorandum by Lieutenant-General Brackenbury and Major-General Newmarch, 19th August 1889, National Archives WO32/6349.
- ⁴³ Memorandum by Lieutenant-General Brackenbury and Major-General Newmarch, 19th August 1889, National Archives WO32/6349, p.1.
- ⁴⁴ Heathcote, T.A *The Indian Army*, p.30.
- ⁴⁵ Memorandum by Lieutenant-General Brackenbury and Major-General Newmarch, National Archives WO32/6349, pp.1-2.
- ⁴⁶ James, Lawrence *Raj: The making and unmaking of British India* (London: Abacus, 1997), p.366.
- ⁴⁷ James, Lawrence *Raj: The making and unmaking of British India*, p.365.
- ⁴⁸ James, Lawrence *Raj: The making and unmaking of British India*, p.365.
- ⁴⁹ Memorandum by Lord Wolseley in response to Memorandum of Lieutenant-General Brackenbury and Major-General Newmarch. 25th August 1889 National Archives WO32/6349, p.4.
- ⁵⁰ Farwell, Byron *Armies of the Raj 1858-1947*, pp.118-119.
- ⁵¹ Memorandum by Sir Ralph Thompson in response to Memorandum of Lieutenant-General Brackenbury and Major-General Newmarch, 15th March 1892, National Archives WO32/6349.
- ⁵² Brackenbury to Collen 28th June 1892 Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum, Woolwich.
- ⁵³ Enclosures of Secret Military Despatch No180, 15th September 1891 National Archives WO32/6349, p.5.
- ⁵⁴ Memorandum by Hon'ble Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Brackenbury, on the Defence of Chitral. 3rd June 1895. British Library Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, Mss.Eur.D.735.
- ⁵⁵ Memorandum by Lieutenant-General Brackenbury and Major-General Newmarch, National Archives WO32/6349, p.2.

-
- ⁵⁶ Military Operations in the event of War with Russia, by Captain J Wolfe Murray, Intelligence Department 17th November 1892. National Archives WO106/6157.
- ⁵⁷ Deputy Quatermaster-General for Intelligence, "A General sketch of the Situation Abroad and at Home from a Military Standpoint". 3rd August 1886 National Archives WO 33/46.
- ⁵⁸ Enclosure of Secret Military Despatch No180 15th September 1891. National Archives WO32/6349, pp.5-6.
- ⁵⁹ Memorandum by Brackenbury, 27th June 1892. British Library Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, Mss.Eur.D.735.
- ⁶⁰ Enclosure of Secret Military Despatch No180 15th September 1891. National Archives WO32/6349, p.5-6.
- ⁶¹ Hopkirk, Peter *The Great Game*, pp.377-381, describes the situation in the context of Anglo-Russian hostility.
- ⁶² Brackenbury to Elles 17th December 1892 Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ⁶³ Brackenbury to Ardagh 4th May 1895, Ardagh Papers National Archives 30/40/2.
- ⁶⁴ Brackenbury to Markham 1st May 1895, Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich.
- ⁶⁵ Brackenbury enjoyed having his own railway carriage, and two splendid houses, but dislike having to accept a bodyguard of Gurkhas.
- ⁶⁶ Brackenbury to Roberts 23rd September 1891. Roberts Papers National Army Museum R11/42.
- ⁶⁷ Brackenbury to Lord Lansdowne 19th July 1892, Brackenbury letter books, Royal Artillery Museum, Woolwich. Describes fully Brackenbury's ideas for the Intelligence Service.

The Director General of Ordnance and The South African War

Introduction

Brackenbury was appointed to the position of Director General of Ordnance in February 1899. As on his arrival at the Intelligence Branch, he was given a reforming brief. Lord Wolseley, now Commander-in-Chief, had argued with the previous Director General, Sir Edward Markham, over the necessity of the complete rearming of all types of artillery. Perhaps surprisingly it was Wolseley and not the artillery officer who saw the necessity for this. In response to Wolseley's pressure Markham set up a series of trials designed to prove the ability of existing guns.¹ Wolseley decided at this point that a new Director General of Ordnance was needed, and with the support of the Secretary of State for War, Lord Lansdowne, the position was offered to Brackenbury.

The accusation that Wolseley was once again promoting the same of members of the 'ring' is not without foundation and it is doubtful that Brackenbury would have been the first choice of many of the other leading generals of the day. It must be remembered that by this stage the 'ring' had all but collapsed. The members of it were now all so senior that they no longer felt the need for Wolseley's patronage, added to which they had fallen out amongst themselves, as the Gordon Relief expedition had illustrated. Wolseley had in fact had a major disagreement with Brackenbury, although it is doubtful that Brackenbury realised this. As we have seen Wolseley had taken offence at Brackenbury's part in the Hartington Commission's recommendation that the office of Commander-in-Chief be abolished and replaced with a Chief-of-Staff. Wolseley saw this as an attempt by Brackenbury to become the first Chief-of-Staff. The second reason for their falling out was Brackenbury's service in India

where he had become too close to Lord Roberts for Wolseley's liking. Again, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Brackenbury had used his considerable knowledge to help advance Roberts position in various debates with the home government. Despite the aforementioned difficulties Wolseley recommended Brackenbury's appointment, which perhaps is further evidence for the reputation Brackenbury had made for himself. Just as important in Brackenbury's appointment was the relationship he had built with Lord Lansdowne when the latter had been Viceroy during his time as Military Member. As we saw in the previous chapter, Lansdowne held him in high regard. That Brackenbury was able to achieve what he did was thanks to him being in the enviable position of having the full backing and cooperation, not to mention trust and confidence, of both the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State.

Brackenbury set about a thorough investigation of his department and its responsibilities and he felt that the rearmament of coastal artillery was the first priority.² When war came in South Africa in October 1899 Brackenbury had started the rearmament of the coastal artillery and had nearly finished his assessment of the department. This chapter will look at the very difficult situation that Brackenbury faced during the South African War and the way in which he responded to the strenuous demands of the conflict. A major source is the evidence he gave to the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, commonly called the Elgin Commission after its chairman the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine.³ Brackenbury was in a strong position. He could not reasonably be held responsible for the state the department was in having only taken over command eight months previously. It was obvious that the problems went back much further than that. He was also the recipient

of much praise for the way he had dealt with the crisis in the department and had initiated large-scale reforms. His reputation preceded him and as a result the commission, and in particular one of its leading members Viscount Esher, dealt with him much more gently than many of the others who came before it.⁴ The result was that he left a fascinating insight into the working of the Ordnance Department, and his evidence shows the working of a vital but sometimes ignored part of any military campaign.

The South African War

To know where to begin when explaining the causes of the South African War is difficult. The clash between Dutch and English in South Africa can be traced back to the British capture of the Cape in 1793. Although returned to the Dutch in 1802 it was recaptured by Britain in 1806 and after this the British presence remained. The Dutch settlers, commonly referred to as Boers, disliked the imposition of British laws and in 1835 this led to an eventual 14,000 Boers leaving British territory in what became known as the Great Trek in the hope of establishing their own state. One of the biggest problems facing them was the number of 'hostile' tribes that surrounded it. By 1877 the Boer settler state of the Transvaal had been annexed by the British as their influence in Southern Africa expanded. This was not welcomed but largely accepted by the Boers, and for two reasons. It did much to put the bankrupt Transvaal back on a sound financial footing; also the British were removing one by one the threat that the tribes had posed to the Boers. It was no coincidence that the first major Boer rebellion against British rule came shortly after the defeat of the Zulu nation, the most powerful of those tribes. The decision to annex the Transvaal had been taken by Disraeli's Conservative government in 1877. Gladstone's Liberals vehemently opposed this; yet Gladstone refused to grant independence when he met a Boer

delegation shortly after his return to office in 1880. In December of that year the Boers rebelled against British rule.

A short-lived war commenced in which a severe defeat was inflicted on the British at Majuba Hill. The Boers were granted independence, but the British retained 'suzerainty'; a fact later denied by the Boers. The peace was conducted swiftly. This was partly because Gladstone wanted to get out quickly from what he saw as an embarrassing 'moral' problem, knowing that public opinion would now be in favour of a revenge annexation of the Transvaal. Moreover the Boers were happy to deal on the right terms as they had achieved a great success and feared the despatch of a more potent British force. Within the British army feelings were running high. There were rumours of possible mutiny amongst officers and men who were disgruntled that they had no chance to 'avenge Majuba', something which was to become a common cry during the South African War.⁵ Lord Wolseley, his judgment somewhat clouded by the death at Majuba of his friend George Colley, never forgave either the Indian Army or troops from India, who he blamed for the defeat, or Evelyn Wood who took over from Colley and under instructions from London signed the peace. Wolseley felt that Wood should have resigned his commission rather than sign.⁶

In the years that followed the importance of the Transvaal grew thanks to the discovery of large gold deposits there in 1886. This meant that the Transvaal had the financial means to remain independent. The Transvaal, and the other Boer state, the Orange Free State, had been allowed to retain independence by the British in the hope that ultimately financial necessity would draw them into a South African Union. When this became unlikely the hope was that the thousands of foreign workers, generally referred to as the Uitlanders, many of whom were British, who had been

attracted by the gold, would eventually dominate the Boers who they outnumbered considerably. Yet this was unrealistic and, more and more, commercial dominance was moving from the Cape to the Transvaal.

In July 1895 Joseph Chamberlain was appointed secretary of State for the Colonies and had decided that something needed to be done to ensure British dominance in South Africa.⁷ He was not alone. Many, although not all, as is often suggested, of the industrialists, financiers and businessmen, in South Africa shared this view. Most notable was Cecil Rhodes, the founder of the De Beers Diamond Company and Consolidated Gold Fields, one of the richest men in the world. Partially motivated by profit, but largely motivated by economic imperialism, he resolved that British dominance of the Transvaal must be established. In this he had the unofficial support of Chamberlain.

Under the banner of supporting the rights of foreign workers in the Transvaal to have equal citizenship, which at present they were being denied, Rhodes private army of 500 men, commanded by Dr Leander Starr Jameson, invaded the Transvaal, on 29th December 1895. It was hoped they would be supported by a Uitlander uprising. The uprising never materialised and the Boers ambushed the invasion force. Jameson suffered 65 casualties, 16 of which were dead. The Boers lost one man. The military disaster was nothing compared to the political one. Rhodes was forced to resign as Prime Minister of Cape Colony. Awkward questions were asked about whether Chamberlain had played any part in the matter. The Germans took the opportunity for some sabre rattling and despatched a cruiser to Delagoa Bay in Portuguese East Africa. The Kaiser sent a telegram of congratulation to the Boer President Paul Kruger. A British Committee of Inquiry largely whitewashed over the events. Neither

Chamberlain nor Rhodes would attack the other for fear of the damage they could possibly inflict in return.⁸

In the aftermath of these events the British Government despatched a new Governor of the Cape and High Commissioner of South Africa, Alfred Milner. His mission was to repair British relations in South Africa and to continue the political struggle against Kruger and the Transvaal. Though his policies and actions have often been seen as preparing for the South African War, it has more recently been suggested that he was merely responding to the actions of the Transvaal.⁹ Yet there is no doubt that his failure to explain himself to those in South Africa made the situation more difficult. It deteriorated to the point where that the Transvaal declared war on the 11th October 1899. By this time 10,000 British troops had been dispatched to South Africa and the former Commander-in-Chief in India, Sir George White, had been sent to command the forces. The decision was reached on the 7th October to mobilise the 1st Army Corps for service in South Africa. By the end of November this had been despatched to South Africa, along with a cavalry division and seven battalions of line of communication troops, in all 50,000 men.

The achievement of mobilising and despatching such a force is often lost in light of the military defeats that followed. It has also been argued that no other nation in the world at that time could have mobilised, despatched, and kept supplied such a force at such a distance.¹⁰ The mobilisation scheme was helped by the fact that the autumn manoeuvres of 1898 had provided some preparation and a work out for the plans. Soldiers and reservists reported promptly to their stations and were taken by train to the ports of embarkation, often before there were ships ready to take them.¹¹ This was particularly impressive as the Admiralty was geared to expansion in time of war,

keeping a full register of all merchant ships available and suitable. It is worth remembering that at the time this was the largest fighting force ever despatched by Britain, and it had been achieved with ease. This was largely thanks to the fact that the military side of the War Office and Admiralty had started preparing for war in April 1899. They prepared as much as they could, but there were some things that had to wait until political approval for the added expenditure was given in late September. Though rightly criticised for much during the war in terms of the way it was fought, the accusation that the Army was unready for war was unfair in the extreme. The War Office had done all it could before the political decision to release the necessary finance to fund the final preparations. Although there had been modifications to the mobilisation scheme since Brackenbury had originally introduced it, in particular by Colonel Ardagh, he had the right to feel proud of what his creation achieved.

Whilst the preparation and despatch of the Army was excellent the course of the war was not. The early set backs could be put down to the fact that fewer than 15,000 British troops confronted about 30,000 Boers.¹² Matters were not helped by the decision of General White to allow himself to be besieged in Ladysmith. Debate rages about this decision, and some have suggested that it saved Natal from being overrun by the Boers.¹³ Yet it was a strange choice given that he had a field force that was not prepared for a siege, and White himself owed a debt to the fact that long-range naval guns were despatched to Ladysmith at the last minute. The setbacks were understandable, if still surprising, and it was felt that Boer success would be short-lived once the army corps under General Sir Redvers Buller arrived. Buller was a brave and fearless leader, but had little idea of command and tactics. Command of an army was beyond him, as might have been expected by his consistently poor showing

in manoeuvres.¹⁴ It was the series of defeats in what was to be called 'Black Week' that were inexcusable in the eyes of the British public. This led to the relegation of Buller to a smaller role whilst Lord Roberts, assisted by the 'hero' of the Sudan campaign, Lord Kitchener, were appointed to overall command. By late 1900 the Boer Army in the field had been defeated and Pretoria their capital had fallen. It was largely presumed that the war was over and Roberts departed leaving Kitchener to complete the mopping up operation. However the war carried on for two more costly years as the Boers embarked on a guerrilla campaign.

Controversy still reigns about the distribution of 'blame' concerning the war. In the immediate aftermath of the war the press and popular literature criticised the politicians. W.T Stead even went so far as to accuse Lord Lansdowne of criminal negligence.¹⁵ Whilst ultimately the failures of the army were the responsibility of ministers and the cabinet, it is unfair to completely exonerate the soldiers. A large degree of over confidence was present in the War Office at the outbreak of the war. Lord Wolseley, once the dynamic driving force of military reform, had largely resigned himself to the state of things in the War Office, and after his appointment as Commander-in-Chief had attempted little reform or modernisation. Wolseley was by this stage old, ill and bitter.¹⁶ Buller has subsequently taken much of the blame for his mishandling of the war. It is difficult to argue with this. His evidence to the Royal Commission and his angry response to criticism made it all the easier for those who wished to use him as a scapegoat. It had been almost fifteen years since he had been on active service, the same period of time as Brackenbury. He had never wanted the command in the first place, perhaps realising his own weaknesses he had said:

I have always considered that I was better as second in a complex military affair than as an officer in chief command.... I had never been in a position where the whole load of responsibility fell on me.¹⁷

His biggest problem was indecision. His plans were usually right enough but he had the habit of changing them at the last minute, which probably came from a lack of confidence in his own ability. He was also apt to send rash signals, such as the one to White at Ladysmith advising him to fire-off the remainder of his ammunition and surrender on the best terms he could. This signal was particularly damaging, but he made things worse by criticising Lansdowne and the War Office, who were able to contradict him with his own words.¹⁸ Buller, unsurprisingly given the stress and series of costly defeats that he suffered, probably had some type of mental breakdown. His state of mind was not helped by the fact that he saw himself as being surrounded by enemies on his own side, caused by the presence of 'Indians'. It was true that men such as Roberts, White and Hamilton, had no love for Buller, and saw him as the principal player in obstructing the promotion of and general discrimination against Indian Army officers.¹⁹

Despite the continuing debate on who was to 'blame', it cannot be argued that the South African War was anything other than a severe defeat, albeit a technical victory, for Britain. It pointed to some weaknesses in the British Army, in terms of equipment, organisation, administration and training. It also demonstrated the folly of relying solely on the Royal Navy for the security of Britain and the Empire. The war did however mean that many of the defects, whilst not all, that were present in the British Army were remedied in the years leading up to the First World War. Field Marshal Lord Carver made the point that the Boer War was a blessing in disguise for the British Army in terms of the preparations made before the First World War.²⁰

The remainder of this chapter looks at the way in which Brackenbury dealt with the crisis in the Ordnance Department that the South African War created. The main

problem was that the war was to be fought on a scale which neither the War Office nor the Army had foreseen. Departments and systems of administration that worked sluggishly during peacetime were barely able to deal with the colonial campaigns that never involved much above 40,000 men. However, the South African War was on a completely different level. Almost half a million men were mobilised from Britain and the Empire. Yet there was no mechanism to increase the scale of administration of the War Office to manage such a force. It was not just the administration that was unprepared. The level of reserves of ordnance and stores was again insufficient to deal with even the size of traditional colonial campaigns. As the forces despatched and maintained in South Africa continued to expand it quickly became clear that not only were the reserves quickly used up but that the ordnance factories and the 'trade' were unable to meet the demand.

Entering the Ordnance Department

Brackenbury had returned from India in 1896 and in May of that year he was appointed to the post of President of the Ordnance Committee by the Secretary of State for War Lord Lansdowne who, it will be remembered, Brackenbury had served under in India. Brackenbury himself whilst giving evidence to the Royal Commission explained his duties.

The Ordnance Committee is a consultative body, which is appointed to take up such questions as may be referred to them by the Director General of Ordnance. It is not an initiative body; it is a consultative body. It is a body which has upon it as President a General of Artillery, the Vice President is an Admiral of the Navy, and the members are two Artillery officers, an Engineer officer, two Naval officers, a consulting officer from India, two civil engineers, Sir Frederick Bramwell, and Sir Benjamin Barker; and the other members are members for special purposes, for instance, the chemist of the War Department and Dr Dupre, the chemist of the Home Department, and such other associate members as are required from time to time.²¹

It can therefore be seen that alongside his knowledge as a serving artillery officer who

had experience of active service Brackenbury also brought to the position knowledge of the workings of the Ordnance Department through his experience with the Ordnance Committee.

He continued as President of the Ordnance Committee until being offered the position as Director General of the Ordnance. Whilst Wolseley had pushed for Brackenbury's appointment after his quarrels with Markham, it must be added that his decision had the full support of Lansdowne. Lansdowne stated that he felt Brackenbury was "head and shoulders above all competitors" for the position.²² In short they were looking for a repeat of his performance in reforming the Intelligence Department. With the backing of the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State for War Brackenbury would have the support he needed to undertake change. However, this was a much greater challenge than the Intelligence Department, if only because of the size of his new responsibility. The Ordnance Department was one of the major appointments at the War Office, on a par with the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General. It had also recently gained added responsibilities.

The department that Brackenbury entered had a wider set of responsibilities than the mere name suggests. Under the Order in Council of the 7th March 1899,

The Director General of Ordnance is charged with supplying the Army with warlike stores, equipment and clothing; with the direction of the Ordnance Committee and the manufacturing departments of the Army; with dealing with questions of armament, patterns, inventions, and designs; and with the inspection of all stores, whether supplied by the manufacturing departments or by contractors.²³

Many of these responsibilities were fairly new to the department never mind Brackenbury. The clothing side had been taken over by the Ordnance Department in December 1898, and Brackenbury had made it a condition of accepting the position

that the ordnance factories were also placed under his command.

The Transfer of the Ordnance Factories

The subject of the ordnance factories deserves further comment as it caused much controversy.²⁴ The ordnance factories were the major source of arms and equipment for the army, but they had been allowed to get into a poor condition. Relations between the Financial Department of the War Office and the factories were not good and there was little consultation, nor any mechanism for it. After the transfer of control the Director of Ordnance Factories was made directly responsible to Brackenbury. Added to this was the antiquated equipment with which the factories were working. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, reasons of economy meant that new investment had not been undertaken. Secondly, the civilian side of the War Office seems to have operated a policy of not wanting to step on the toes of 'the trade', that is the private arms firms who provided the remainder of the army and navy munitions. The power of British industry was considered to be such that the trade could cover any deficiencies in the ordnance factories. This was a bubble that the South African War would burst.²⁵

Brackenbury's time as President of the Ordnance Committee, from his return from India in 1896 until his appointment as Director General of Ordnance, in 1899, had alerted him to this deficiency and the South African War was to demonstrate further the antiquated machinery and practices of the ordnance factories. The main problem that Brackenbury saw was that the factories were under the direction of the Financial Secretary at the War Office, Mr Powell-Williams, who was a civilian. Brackenbury told the Royal Commission that, as a result, the management of the factories had become divorced from the needs and requirements of the army.²⁶ Brackenbury's

belief in the necessity of this section being under control of the Director General of Ordnance was justified by the events of the South African War. As he said before the Royal Commission:

If the Director General of Ordnance, instead of being able to go direct to his head of the factories, and turn him off from his work on to that work, to suit the exigencies of the moment, had had to go with his hat in his hand to the Financial Secretary and ask that this, that, and the other might be done, I do not think we could have supplied the Army during the war....²⁷

Although Brackenbury made a valid point, it must be pointed out that a large amount of the material for South Africa, especially clothing and stores still had to be supplied largely by the 'trade', but the change undoubtedly made things easier for him.

Brackenbury's demand that the ordnance factories be placed under his control as a condition of his acceptance of the position prompted an interesting political debate. The Financial Secretary of the War Office, who despite Lansdowne's assurances to the contrary, saw the removal as a comment on his abilities, opposed the removal of the ordnance factories from his control. To an extent he was correct and it was a comment on his abilities, as Brackenbury and Lansdowne both clashed with him over matters of inspection and his dealings with the trade. One of St John Broderick's first duties on becoming Secretary of State for War in October 1900 was to remove Powell-Williams from his job. Arthur Balfour wrote of Powell-Williams that, "He would never have got even his present place except as the immediate personal friend and follower of Joe".²⁸ 'Joe' was Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies and as the unofficial leader of the faction that split from the Liberal Party to join the Conservative Party, a figure of importance. As we have seen already, in regards to the Jameson Raid, he was also controversial, and the role of companies of which his brother was chairman and he himself had an interest will be touched on later. It is unsurprising then that Chamberlain opposed the transfer of control of the

ordnance factories. He complained to Balfour that Lansdowne was “Brackenbury-ridden”.²⁹ This however missed the point that Lansdowne was also convinced of the necessity of the change, as was evidenced by his defence of the policy in cabinet. It may also illustrate that Chamberlain had a personal dislike of Brackenbury, and it will be remembered that Brackenbury and the Liberal Party had not been on the best of terms. It is also worth pointing out that Gladstone held a grudge many years after Brackenbury’s time in Ireland, so it may not be as unrealistic as it sounds that Chamberlain was influenced by past political quarrels.³⁰

In the cabinet debate that followed Powell-Williams produced a seven-page memorandum supporting the retention of the existing system. This document drew attention to the poor state that had existed before the present system had been introduced, and received support from members of the cabinet, including St John Broderick who had been financial secretary when Stanhope had initially introduced the present system and could therefore remember better than most the state the factories had been in before transfer to the financial department. Similarly unsurprising was the opposition to the transfer of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Michael Hicks-Beech, who was naturally opposed to anything that would weaken civilian control of military expenditure. The transfer was not without support in cabinet, the most prominent advocate being George Goschen, First Lord of the Admiralty. The Royal Navy also relied on the ordnance factories, and was equally effected by their current poor state. Lord Salisbury also supported the move, but as Prime Minister he was trying his best to maintain cabinet harmony. His suggestion was the establishment of a Cabinet Committee, made up of the Duke of Devonshire (who as Lord Hartington had recommended the transfer of the ordnance factories

back to military control as Chairman of the Hartington Commission), Lord Lansdowne, Hicks-Beech and Goschen, to investigate the matter. The committee was set up and unsurprisingly, given that three of its members had already announced their support for the transfer, recommended that Lansdowne's plan be introduced.³¹ This committee can be seen as Salisbury giving his Chancellor an opportunity to state his case fully, but there can have been little doubt of the outcome.

Lansdowne had defended the transfer by saying that he was following the advice of four separate Commissions that had looked at this matter, and that he was not advocating a return to the old system, as Powell-Williams had suggested.³² Financial control would still ultimately rest with the Financial Secretary, but the Director General of Ordnance would draw up proposals and calculations. Lansdowne also took the opportunity to deny another fear that Powell-Williams had raised, namely that military control would lead to discrimination against the 'trade', and to this end Lansdowne was supported by Sir Andrew Noble of the armaments manufacturers Armstrong's.³³ It was also argued that it was dangerous to have the same person responsible for both the department and the means of production, as it was felt that conflicts of interest would be inevitable. Lansdowne pointed out that this could set a dangerous precedent as the same argument could be applied to the position of the Secretary of State. In the end the cabinet supported Lansdowne and the transfer was approved. What this whole episode illustrated was the continuing exertions of successive governments to establish unequivocally the paramount control of civilian government over the military. Andrew Page makes the point that no other transfer in any other department of government would have caused such controversy and division, nor would it have needed a cabinet committee to settle it.³⁴ It was yet another example of the distrust of soldiers as 'managers'.

The system that the transfer created was not without problems. The main one probably was the need for the continual reference by the Director General of Ordnance to the Financial Secretary, and when war came such problems were exacerbated. Change was necessary for wartime, and Brackenbury gave an example of that when, one day early in the war, 138 items had to be costed and proposals drawn up, necessitating reference to facilities at Woolwich, Pimlico and Weedon to get the necessary information.³⁵ Such a highly bureaucratic system was troublesome enough in peacetime, but was doomed to failure in war, and particularly with the unexpectedly large demands that the South African War placed on the Ordnance Department. Brackenbury was able to obtain verbal, and later written, permission from Lansdowne that 'urgent' demands could be ordered before detailed calculations were given. He subsequently took the view that everything connected with the war fell into the category of 'urgent', and thus for the remainder of the war he had near exclusive control of all financial decisions, although he reported to the Army Board how much he had spent each week. Sometimes he pushed his wartime authority to the limit, such as when, on his own authority, he had ten new buildings erected for the cartridge division of the Arsenal at Woolwich.³⁶

Brackenbury's Report on the Ordnance Department

Brackenbury decided that his first task should be to undertake a thorough review of his department. Partly this was as a means to changes he had been brought in to undertake, but also because little was known within the department of the new responsibilities for clothing and the ordnance factories. The completion of his report was delayed by the start of the South African War, but on the 15th December 1899 he presented his findings to the Commander-in-Chief.³⁷ The major finding was the

department's total unpreparedness for war and, in particular, the virtually non-existent reserves of equipment. There was barely enough for the despatch of two army corps which had been the working standard for the mobilisation scheme since the Stanhope Memorandum. It must be remembered that although technically part of the reserves, the stores to equip the two army corps were held separately. The reserves accounted for the equipment to supply the corps once in the field.

Brackenbury's report found that there were many deficiencies in the levels of reserves. In fact his report declared that the only items in which the reserves were ample were for rifles, carbines, revolvers and lances. By the end of 1899 14,000 rifles, 850 carbines, 1,400 pistols and 500 lances had been despatched to South Africa from the reserves, and Brackenbury declared that they still had good stocks.³⁸ Perhaps this is not surprising. Lances were used less as the war went on and cavalry were reluctant to use their carbines, although as the war continued they were forced to change. The large reserves of revolvers is not surprising as many officers continued the practice of using privately bought small arms rather than the Webley service revolver.³⁹ The reserve of rifles, especially of older patterns, was vital. As demand grew with the despatch of more soldiers a problem was discovered with the new Lee-Enfield, which was found to be incorrectly sighted, so that it fired 18 inches to the right when firing at 500 yards.⁴⁰ In all other areas the reserves were alarmingly below the authorised number. In many cases this was because the forces in South Africa grew so rapidly. Difficulties were identified in clothing, infantry accoutrements, camping equipment, and tents. There were however other items that were insufficient because of the unconventional nature and conditions of the South Africa War. The unprecedented need for mounted infantry meant that saddlery reserves were totally

insufficient. At the outbreak of the war there were only 500 sets in reserve. By the end of 1899 Brackenbury had despatched or had on order some 11,525 extra sets. The same was true of mule harness of which 1,700 were in reserve. The need to transport supplies along vast distances without the use of the railways meant that mules played an important role. By the end of 1899 Brackenbury had despatched nearly 25,000 sets. Another problem along similar lines concerned the vehicles of the Army Service Corps. The majority were unsuited for the harsh terrain of South Africa, having been designed for use in European conditions. Brackenbury ordered 600 vehicles from the trade in this country and authorised the buying of many more in South Africa itself.

Many of the deficiencies were due to the practice of borrowing from the reserve for overseas expeditions without any thought being given to replacement. There was also a belief in the power of British industry to make good any gaps. It was publicly stated that reserves were kept to the bare minimum in the belief that any force sent overseas could be maintained by the output of the ordnance factories and the trade.⁴¹ The key reason for doing this was for the sake of economy but there was a more legitimate reason. It was likely that equipment left in the reserve would be of quite old patterns. To maintain the reserve with the level of equipment of the army corps would require continual, and expensive, maintenance of a large level of stocks. With belief in the power of British industry to be able to provide anything at short notice this would have seemed a much better option. It would mean that any force on active service would be provided with the very latest equipment straight from the factory. Whilst a somewhat naïve approach it would have been very appealing to those responsible, soldiers and civilians alike, as army expenditure was always scrutinised most carefully.

The problem was that the aforementioned practice had denuded the reserves to a level that was completely inadequate for the size of campaign that followed. It is certain that even if the reserves had been up to the expected level they would have proved insufficient to meet the demands of the South African War. The war took the British Army into a position, in terms of numbers in the field, which they had never been in before. The fact is that if the reserves had been up to the required level things would have gone more smoothly for the Ordnance Department and the demands of the situation could have been met more easily. The problem was that even the basic field force that had been envisaged in the mobilisation plans did not have the necessary reserves to bring it up to wartime standard or to keep it at that level for the initially envisaged six months.

Brackenbury found that by the time he had completed his report he had already despatched the majority of reserves to South Africa, and in most instances he had already sent double what he had originally had in reserve. The fact that this was only two months into the war was not lost on him. Nor was the fact that whilst the reserves were now empty the war was still escalating and the number of troops that had to be equipped was growing steadily. To meet these demands he had to borrow equipment from all over the empire and the Royal Navy. In light of this Brackenbury wrote that his report had:

...disclosed a situation as regards armaments, and reserves of guns, ammunition, stores and clothing, and as regards the power of output of material of war in emergency, which is, in my opinion full of peril for the Empire.⁴²

He therefore urged that the report was acted upon as soon as possible. To assist him in his attempts at reform he had been given permission by Lansdowne to send papers to

him directly rather than through the normal War Office channels, provided that the papers were also sent to those who would normally have received them. Lansdowne took the report straight to the cabinet and used it as his main tool in trying to get increased expenditure for the maintenance of the army during the war.

There was a wider, longer term, angle that Brackenbury wanted to pursue. He wanted change quickly so that in any future conflict his successor would not have to cope with the same problems that he did. A lot of the modernisation proposals he made were not particularly designed to fight the present conflict. As his report made clear, “The following are absolutely necessary to enable us to carry on a war with a maritime power, in which both Navy and Army might be engaged”.⁴³ He took the opportunity to again emphasise the importance of the rearmament of the coastal defences, probably fearing that the money put aside for this would be transferred to fund his other proposals. He also pressed for the construction of new ordnance store buildings, to be completed as soon as possible. It was one thing to press for increased holdings of reserves but without increased space they could not be stored efficiently. Part of this was development of the buildings of the army Clothing Department, which he had found to be ill equipped even for the maintenance of the army in peacetime. Alongside this came the demand that the ordnance factories be completely re-equipped with modern labour-saving machinery which in Brackenbury’s estimation would increase output by 50%.⁴⁴

Brackenbury also took the opportunity to criticise the way in which the War Office did business in general. He pointed out that the cost of the changes would be impossible to achieve through the usual route of the Annual Army Estimates. He criticised the present system:

...under which orders cannot be given for any length of time ahead, which cripples the power of output of the trade. They will not, under such a system, invest money in buildings or plant, not knowing from year to year whether they will have further orders.⁴⁵

It was a very pertinent point and one that the events of the war would bear out. A trade that was used to the small annual orders from the War Office could not meet the large-scale demands that the war created. As profit making concerns they were unlikely to keep plant in reserve for emergencies; it would not be cost effective. In such a case it was essential that the ordnance factories were efficient and modern, so that capability to increase production in time of emergency existed. It also underlined Brackenbury's demand that there should be a reserve of output, in the form of buildings and machinery, which would only be used in time of war.

The word demand is not too strong a word to use when viewing Brackenbury's recommendations in his report, as it was in many ways a series of ultimatums. It is no exaggeration to say that even Brackenbury was shocked at the situation he found in the department. The report on its state was a considered view of what Brackenbury felt was wrong and what needed to be done. No official record exists, but it is known that he told Lord Roberts he was prepared to resign if the necessary money was not made available for the reforms his report outlined, saying "I hope and pray they will be accepted. If not they must find another D.G.O."⁴⁶ Given Brackenbury's close working relationship with Lansdowne it is unlikely that ministers would have had no idea of Brackenbury's threat to resign. He was also following a similar course to when he was in Ireland, in that he would not go on if, after being asked to come up with a solution to the problem, his plans were ignored on financial grounds. There was undoubtedly an element of arrogance in his approach towards the government. In this case he was the expert and the government should take his word for it when he

said that this was necessary. If, as seems likely, the government were aware of his threat to resign it may well have had a much stronger impact than would normally be expected. His resignation would have come at a time when the government were being strongly criticised for its conduct of the war. Questions were being asked in both parliament and the press about the preparedness of the country. If at this time a senior member of the War Office, in fact a member of the Army Board, had resigned because of the government's failure to back what would have appeared to be essential reform, the ramifications could have been considerable. The damage would have been increased by his reputation as one of the army's leading administrators.

Brackenbury's threat of resignation was made particularly effective because of the course of the South African War. At any other time his resignation might cause slight embarrassment to the government but it would not have received the publicity that his resignation during the war would likely have caused. The same could be said of the changes that Brackenbury was able to undertake. Whilst there was recognition that reform was needed, both by soldiers and politicians within the War Office, if the war had not created the impetus politically the reform would probably have been only piecemeal. The war highlighted the scale of change that was needed. It opened eyes to the necessity not only of being able to send a force overseas, which the mobilisation plans were equipped to accomplish, but also the need to be able to maintain such a force. In this Britain was fortunate to have the world's largest navy, both militarily and in terms of mercantile shipping. The problem the war highlighted was the 'failure' of the trade to be able to supply a force in the field. This was perhaps an unrealistic aim in the first place, but it was the theory that the War Office entered the South African War believing. The war showed that there was a need to be able to supply a force largely out of reserves and the ordnance factories for at least a

significant part of any war, so that the trade had time to catch up in terms of finishing other orders, changing patterns to meet War Office requirements or changing to new equipment and methods of production to produce what was required.

The Mowatt Committee

The reforms that Brackenbury's report suggested would necessitate a large one off payment to cover them. Brackenbury himself gave no estimate of the cost of his changes, aside from the £1.3 million he asked for new machinery for the ordnance factories. He felt that a loan of £10 million would be the minimum needed. This would be used for new buildings and machinery for the ordnance factories and the Clothing Department, guns and ammunition for the new coastal defences, and to start establishing a reserve of stores for the future. He realised, and wanted the politicians to realise, that this in itself would not be enough. "I cannot say whether this may cost 10, 15, or 20 millions sterling. I can only say it is necessary to spend whatever it may cost to save us from this situation of peril".⁴⁷ The Mowatt Committee, named after its chairman, Sir Francis Mowatt the Permanent Under Secretary of the Treasury, was established to look into the need for these measures.⁴⁸ Apart from Mowatt the committee comprised two other members, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for War, Mr George Windham M.P, and the Director General of Stores at the India Office, Mr E Grant Burls. Its terms of reference were to establish the number of guns needed to form a reserve of 25 per cent for Horse and Field artillery, and for the siege train, and the amount of ammunition needed to maintain a reserve of 6 months supply of 1,000 rounds per gun. It also had a wider reference to look at the reserve of stores needed to maintain three army corps, one cavalry division and line of communication troops overseas for a period of six months. It was argued that if six months of supply

could be found from the reserves this would give time for the ordnance factories and the trade to change over to the demands of wartime. The committee was also asked to look at what was needed to complete the number of guns for fortress and coastal artillery and to provide a satisfactory reserve of ammunition for them. It will be remembered that this was one of Brackenbury's original proposals and, whilst the government had agreed to the expenditure in principle, it had not been forthcoming. Thus Brackenbury used the Mowatt Committee to remind the government of this pressing need.

The committee was established largely at the insistence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Michael Hicks Beach. His chief argument was that he objected to relying on the word of a single man, Brackenbury, who himself had a vested interest.⁴⁹ Hicks Beach no doubt felt that Mowatt, who it could be argued equally had a vested interest, would share his reluctance to spend the large amount that Brackenbury had requested. He had good cause to believe this as in the build up to the war Mowatt had supported Hicks Beach's opposition to increased Army spending. Mowatt probably did share his reluctance, yet it seems that his investigation persuaded him that the expenditure was necessary. There was also an economic argument for the one-off expenditure, which Mowatt seems to have grasped but that Hicks Beach did not. The war had pushed up War Office costs and the current arrangements were extremely expensive. Overtime was being paid on a constant basis and the wear and tear on machinery would necessitate complete replacement before too long. Added to this was the inflated cost that the trade was charging for wartime supplies. Brackenbury's scheme would have increased the capacity of the ordnance factories by 50 per cent. More important was one of Brackenbury's other suggestions. He had recommended that new buildings and machinery be established

which would be for wartime use only.⁵⁰ He had expected that once the reserves had been used up, the additional buildings at the ordnance factories would be up and running and able to meet the increased demand. This was a recognition that the trade could not be so heavily relied upon to do just what the Government wanted suddenly, and rightly so as they were profit-making organisations. It was unrealistic to ask them to drop all other orders or to keep reserve capacity purely for time of emergency under present circumstances.

Hicks-Beach obviously regarded Brackenbury with suspicion. If he had ever read or witnessed the proceedings of the Mowatt Committee he would certainly have had grounds for feeling that way. Whilst Mowatt was chairman it was undoubtedly Brackenbury's Committee. It sat for nineteen days and examined twenty-five witnesses. Brackenbury was examined extensively himself but was also there when those who served under him were examined and was given leave by the chairman to make comments when he wanted. He was also allowed to cross-examine these witnesses, and he used the committee to make his case. Mowatt's attitude towards Brackenbury was unusual to say the least. Many of Mowatt's questions to Brackenbury could be construed as 'leading' questions as they allowed him to make quite sweeping statements on the state of the department and his remedy for it. The interviewing was extensive and went beyond those officers within the Ordnance Department. The Adjutant General, Sir Evelyn Wood, and the Storekeeper-General of Naval Ordnance, Colonel Thales Pease, were called. So too were the various civil servants who had responsibility within the War Office. Interestingly enough there was only one M.P. amongst the witnesses, which is slightly strange given that they were responsible for the financial and administrative arrangements of the War Office.

Perhaps this illustrates a desire on the part of Lord Lansdowne to keep the committee as one of 'experts' in an attempt to enhance the case for the expenditure. Eight of the witnesses represented the trade, many of whom were keen to defend themselves against the criticism they had received for their role in the war up to that point.⁵¹

The Mowatt Committee ended up agreeing entirely with Brackenbury and its recommendations were almost exactly the same as those that he had put forward in his report on the state of his department.⁵² This included agreement with his suggested levels of reserves for guns and ammunition, more uniformity of dress for wartime and peacetime, maintaining the amounts of reservists' equipment up to the same level as regulars', and his proposed keeping of six months supply of stores to maintain an army in the field. They also agreed with his suggestion that mobilisation plans should be based around three army corps, one cavalry division and line of communication troops. Wolseley, who had become obsessed with a three army corps system, undoubtedly influenced this. Whilst criticised as insufficient, as it would take a force larger than this to subdue the Boers never mind defeat a European power, it has been defended as being the best Wolseley believed he could get out of governments who feared a large standing army and a society extremely reluctant to accept conscription. This may well be true but his defence of a three Army Corps system to the Elgin Commission was on the grounds that this force could match any threat from any power, which was rather an unusual position to take. The Committee supported Brackenbury's call for increased storage space and new buildings and machinery for the ordnance factories, adding that they felt no time should be lost in the completion of this. Much to Brackenbury's delight they also criticised the failure to enforce the penalties for late delivery that were written into every contract with the trade. There was also support for his scheme of having 'reserve' factories that would be used only

in emergency. Another interesting suggestion was the idea of moving so-called 'danger' buildings. The Committee acknowledge Brackenbury as the source of this idea, despite the fact that he mentioned it neither in his report or his evidence to the Committee. This once again suggests that he had the chairman's ear.⁵³ In short the idea was that the buildings in which explosives were made and used should be moved from their present location surrounded by other factories and workshops to more isolated areas. The idea being that any explosion in the current location would cause serious damage to other factories and could virtually stop production of all stores at the various ordnance factories.

The Mowatt Committee gave detailed costs of all their recommendations. The first figure they arrived at was £6,482,567. This would cover the reserve of guns and ammunition of fortress, coastal, siege, horse and field guns, and a 25% reserve of machine guns and also the reserve of general stores for three army corps, one cavalry division and line of communications troops and a six-month working stock. This also covered the removal and rebuilding of the 'danger' buildings and the additional storage facilities that had been proposed. In addition to this was £1,586,338 to carry out existing recommendations for improvements to field and horse artillery, and £3,552,965 to complete the rearmament of coastal batteries and buildings, which had already been agreed upon. This brought the total requested by the Mowatt Committee to £11,621,870.⁵⁴ This was to be provided over three years

The Mowatt Committee had the backing of the War Office, both civilian and military, the cabinet, and the trade. Yet despite having called for the committee in the first place Hicks-Beech refused to accept its findings, despite the fact that the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury had himself investigated and drawn up the

proposed expenditure. Whilst it might be expected that he would oppose such a level of expenditure the way in which Hicks-Beach did it, without regard for the opinion of the military, the cabinet and his own Permanent Secretary was quite extraordinary. He made a counter proposal of a little over £3,000,000 that illustrated his failure to grasp the seriousness of the situation both politically and materially. He abrasively stated that even this reduced amount was conditional upon immediate acceptance with no further claims being made. This was a misjudgement of the strength of the position of Lansdowne and Brackenbury, especially when supported by the Permanent Secretary of the Treasury. With the cabinet also supporting them, Hicks-Beach was forced to take the findings of the Mowatt Committee seriously. The Chancellor was eventually persuaded to agree to expenditure of £10,500,000, over three years from 1901-1904 to meet the recommendation of the Committee.⁵⁵

Over reliance on 'the trade'

During the war significant sectors of the economy became almost entirely committed to the production of equipment for South Africa. This was on a larger scale than anything seen before. The significance of this is often lost in the light of the subsequent events of the two world wars of the twentieth century. Although the War Office had its own factories it was never the intention that they should be able to supply the army by themselves. It was said that:

Their function was seen as providing a model for the trade to work from, to check how much items cost to manufacture, to make those items which the trade was unable or unwilling to produce, and to give a certain flexibility in providing for the needs of the moment.⁵⁶

This was an arrangement that was largely due to financial constraints. The Treasury would not allow plant or machinery to be kept merely for expansion in time of war. There was also an element of arrogance about the supposed status of British industry.

There was an assumption that British industry could produce anything at any notice, an assumption that was never investigated. It was this assumption of the strength and flexibility of British industry that led the War Office to presume that the day-to-day upkeep of any field force could be maintained by the trade. The South African War showed that such faith in the trade was misplaced.

Army Contracts

Brackenbury soon found much to complain about in the way that firms treated contracts with the War Office. The Director of Army Contracts drew them up, and from 1895 Mr Alfred Major had held that position. He was a civilian working under the Financial Secretary of the War Office with a staff of 27, which was increased to 34 during the war. The title is slightly misleading, as he also had to act for the Admiralty, the Government of India, the Colonial Office, the Metropolitan Police and the Post Office. Brackenbury disliked the system, largely because of its overly bureaucratic nature, and in November 1899 he proposed to the Army Board that for the duration of the war the system of obtaining everything through the Director of Army Contracts be abandoned.⁵⁷ The idea had merit as the Director of Army Contracts would on the whole only deal with companies who were on the approved list of War Office firms. It led to supply being dominated by a few firms, such as the Birmingham Small Arms Company and London Small Arms Company who were the only suppliers of service rifles. Webley had a monopoly on service revolvers, although officers did purchase others privately. Only seven companies ever supplied cordite for ammunition, and just three, Kynochs, National Explosives and Noble Explosives supplied most of it, despite the fact that there were an estimated twenty manufacturers within the country.⁵⁸

With the supply of cordite being a particular problem, so much so that at one point Brackenbury had to send out a consignment of shells filled with gunpowder, the Director of Contracts refusal to go outside the seven War Office recognised firms appears strange. Brackenbury also felt that at a time where demand was outstripping supply there was much to be gained from approaching foreign manufacturers. Indeed, as the war went on, more material was purchased overseas. Horses and mules were brought from all over the world, and horseshoes, largely from Germany and Sweden. It was found that no firm in Britain was geared up to produce mule shoes and these inevitably had to be sought abroad.⁵⁹ A major objection to the purchase of overseas goods, and the one which the Financial Secretary and his department used, was the fear of reliance on foreign powers for supplies in time of war. Although a valid concern it overlooked two points. Firstly, the purchase of overseas goods was only designed to get the army through the war, and many of the items were already being used as examples for British designs; it was not intended as a long-term solution. Secondly, a lot of the items purchased were brought with the necessary amount of supplies and spares to last its lifetime. The obvious example for this is the decision to purchase four Austrian made 9.4 inch howitzers, which used a special kind of ammunition. Brackenbury brought sufficient ammunition to last the rather limited lifetime of the guns.⁶⁰ He was only ever recommending a temporary process of buying overseas and never contemplated a long-term change. Brackenbury saw it as something that would help deal with the present demand and get the army through the current crisis. By the end of the war he hoped to have the necessary reforms underway to avoid such a crisis in the future. Despite this the Director of Contracts took great offence at his idea and complained to the Financial Secretary who in turn complained to the Secretary of State. Lansdowne prevailed upon Brackenbury to apologize, and a

veiled apology was made before the Army Board where Brackenbury expressed his belief in the system but maintained that the present emergency called for temporary measures.⁶¹

'The Trade'

The commercial sector as a whole was commonly referred to at the War Office as 'the trade'. Brackenbury faced constant problems with many suppliers which stemmed from the casual approach of his predecessors. One of the worst culprits was the Birmingham firm of Kynochs, who produced shells and small arms ammunition for the War Office⁶². They were often unable to supply the amounts for which they had been contracted. For the financial year 1898-1899, for example, they had been for asked to supply 10 million rounds of small arms ammunition yet supplied only 6 million.⁶³ Brackenbury complained to the Financial Secretary and demanded that the financial penalties that were in the contract agreement be imposed in line with War Office procedures. As was noted above, such penalties were rarely used and this proved to be half the problem as it allowed a situation to develop whereby firms ignored delivery dates knowing that there would be no consequences. One of the complications surrounding Kynochs, and probably one of the reasons for Powell-Williams reluctance to impose financial sanctions, was the fact that Arthur Chamberlain, the brother of Joseph, was chairman of the firm, having succeeded his brother in that capacity. Mention has already been made of Arthur Balfour's belief that Powell-Williams owed his job to Chamberlain and their relationship obviously played a part in his reluctance to impose the fines which were in the contract. However, this cannot have been the whole reason, as the system of fines was not imposed on other companies. As the Mowatt Committee explained:

:

It is true that every contract entered into by the Contract Department contains a clause by which a penalty is imposed for arrears of delivery, but the penalty is very rarely enforced, and has come to be regarded by contractors as a dead letter.⁶⁴

Brackenbury complained to Lansdowne who decided that a compromise arrangement should be sought and the following year's order was reduced to 6 million rounds.

Brackenbury was not pleased as the amount, added to the 4 million outstanding, equalled the amount that Kynochs had already proved they were unable to produce.

This was not the end of the conflict with the Chamberlains. Brackenbury later wrote to Arthur Balfour about the failure of the firm in quite aggressive language and pointedly added that; "You can show the letter to (Joseph) Chamberlain".⁶⁵ Kynochs further annoyed Brackenbury when they took on a financially lucrative contract from the United States, and further delayed deliveries to the War Office that were already in arrears. Arthur Chamberlain was called to give evidence to the Mowatt Committee, and his evidence has justly been described as both arrogant and patronising.⁶⁶ There were also moments when, under quite aggressive questioning from the Chairman, his evidence appeared to be contradictory. At one point he claimed that with only a few weeks notice he could have met Brackenbury's demands. He later contradicted this by saying that the reason he could not meet the demands was because of the United States order, which he felt fully entitled to take because there was no arrangement by which British orders were to be given greater priority.⁶⁷ His protestations did little to convince anyone that it was anything other than a matter of money. In fact it appears to have been quite common that foreign orders were dealt with first as the delivery of these on time was thought to be especially important. Something of an attitude of 'anything will do' for the War Office seems to have

existed. He also gave conflicting evidence when asked if the Director of Army Contracts had approved the order for the United States. He originally answered 'Yes', but changed his mind when read Brackenbury's evidence which contradicted him.⁶⁸

Chamberlain claimed that under Brackenbury's predecessors delivery dates were never taken seriously and were not considered as binding contracts. He felt that Brackenbury's criticism was completely unfair and that the new Director General of Ordnance did not understand the way business was done. "The Director General of Ordnance probably did not know that everybody is more or less behindhand; it is common practice and there has never been any attempt at the War Office to cut out contractors for being in arrears". Chamberlain also made a thinly veiled attack on Brackenbury stating that before war was declared, "We had not become aware of the existence of Sir Henry Brackenbury".⁶⁹ He then went on to attack him as a "new broom" that he held personally responsible for the unreasonable suggestion that a fine be imposed. He actually went further and declared that before Brackenbury nobody cared whether deliveries were on time or not. Saving money for Kynochs, he said, was more important than "being bound by time".⁷⁰ Whilst Chamberlain's position was in one sense understandable, after all he was a businessman; it did not go down well at a time when the country was at war and facing a very real shortage of ammunition. Kynochs were not alone, but they were by far and away the worst offender. In fairness it must be added that some firms, most notably Armstrong and Whitworth Ltd, tried to do all they could to help Brackenbury during this period. At one point they were able, after a special request, to make limbers and carriages for six batteries of artillery in a month. Sir Andrew Noble, in evidence, said that he had at one point proposed a plan for the expansion of their plant for times of emergencies,

but that the then Director General of Ordnance, Sir Frederick Bramwell, had shown no interest in the scheme.⁷¹

Also interesting to note is the evidence of Colonel Sir W.D. Richardson to the Elgin Commission after the South African War.⁷² Colonel Richardson arrived in South Africa in early October 1899 and took up the appointment of Deputy Adjutant-General for Supplies and Transport. Later on in the war he became Director of Supplies in Cape Town. His evidence showed the stark contrast of American attitudes towards supplying the British Army. Colonel Richardson told how every two to three weeks he would be visited by the American Consul-General at Cape Town, Mr Stowe, who would check to make sure American orders were satisfactory and whether there was anything else they could do to help. One problem Colonel Richardson had was the size of tins of meat. Normally such tins would be in 1lb or 2lb sizes, which could be carried by individual soldiers. During the war, because of the unexpectedly large demands for meat, much of the meat was sent out in 4lb or 6lb tins. Not only were these far heavier, but also there was as a consequence large-scale waste, as what was not eaten had to be thrown away. Colonel Richardson, according to his evidence, mentioned this problem to the Consul-General and was told that despite the fact that American firms did not normally produce them in 1lb or 2lb tins they would have no problem in supplying them. According to Colonel Richardson the Consul-General said: "When you are buying tins by the million, you have only to let it be known what you want".⁷³ Whilst this perhaps says more about the contemporary business practices of the United States and Britain, it does serve to illustrate something of the ways in which parts of British industry could have been more helpful. Many British firms saw the demands of the South African war as problems that would cost them money, whereas many U.S firms took the opportunity to make money by meeting the demand

of the moment.

It is likely that the attitude expressed by many foreign firms was exactly what Brackenbury wanted from all British firms. The situation in South Africa was after all being portrayed as a national crisis and Brackenbury's attitude towards some of the firms seems to suggest that he expected them to do their bit for the war effort. However, with the Financial Secretary unwilling to impose sanctions upon the firms that failed to meet deadlines there was little else that Brackenbury could do. He eventually managed to get Lord Lansdowne's approval that, rather than fine firms, they would be charged the difference in the cost that the War Office undertook to make good the shortfall in their supply. Given that prices in general had risen during the war this was no little expense. It seems to have had little effect as the practice of charging the difference to the offending firm became common.

It is unlikely that there was any personal agenda in Brackenbury's tough attitude towards Kynochs in particular. They were at that time a major supplier, but also one of the worst offenders. After his original conflict with the firm Brackenbury was amazed when next year's order was again placed largely with them. He made the point to the Mowatt Committee that the treatment of Kynochs was unfair on those suppliers who did meet deadlines. He gave the example of the Birmingham Metal and Munitions Company which, on the 6th September 1898, had along with Kynochs, received an order for 10 million rounds of ammunition. By the 31st March 1899 the B.M.M.C had delivered the entire order, whilst Kynochs had failed to deliver almost half theirs, some 4,976,974 rounds. Yet in the next set of orders the Director of Contracts awarded 60% of the order to Kynochs rather than the other Birmingham firm. The decision was baffling. Admittedly Kynochs were marginally cheaper, but

they had already proved that they were unreliable and there were serious doubts about their quality. Brackenbury felt that the B.M.M.C should have been rewarded for their performance with an increased order.⁷⁴

The whole situation with Kynochs was also caught up in a much wider public debate about the role of Joseph Chamberlain within the firm, which was the subject of an attack from the Liberal M.P, and ‘pro-Boer’ campaigner, David Lloyd George. He asked Chamberlain in parliament about his connection with Kynochs. Chamberlain replied that he was no longer a shareholder or had any control over the management of the company. Lloyd-George also asked why Kynochs had been awarded a contract to supply cordite for ammunition when of the seven tenders they were the most expensive.⁷⁵ The only logical reason for accepting the highest tender would be if the firm were known for their prompt delivery and reliability or the superior quality of their product and this was obviously not the case. To Brackenbury, that “First rate man of business”, as Wolseley called him, it seemed incredible that a firm that so blatantly ignored delivery dates escaped penalty. Brackenbury’s relationship with the Chamberlains was not helped by the fact that Lloyd George often quoted from the official reports and evidence of Brackenbury to further embarrass Joseph Chamberlain.⁷⁶ The evidence of the representatives of other firms to the Mowatt Committee in this context is interesting. Without directly saying so they appear to have taken the example of Kynochs as a warning. Though some firms had tried their best before, there were those like Vickers, Hadfields and Firth and sons who were now trying to meet deadlines. Whilst this is partly due to a sense of patriotism stirred by war, the example of the way Brackenbury had dealt with Kynochs may have had some impact.

Quality and Inspection

There was a much wider problem with the quality of goods provided by the trade, but once again the worst offender was Kynochs. In one week in early 1900 Kynochs had 1,749,000 rounds rejected.⁷⁷ On completion of any order it was returned with an inspection note stating the pattern and quantity. The goods were then inspected by Lt-Colonel C.F. Hadden the Chief Inspector Army Ordnance Department, and his staff. After the goods had been counted and inspected the note was completed and sent to the Principal Ordnance Officer, Colonel Steevens, who then notified the firms as to the findings. On receiving the news of the large-scale rejection Kynochs sent one of their agents, General Arbuthnot, to inquire as to the reason. Arbuthnot inspected the items and agreed with the rejection and declared that the reason for the fault was too much 'varnish'.⁷⁸ The matter seemed to be closed until Arthur Chamberlain came to see Brackenbury and complained that the reasons for the rejection of his ammunition were wrong, despite the opinion of his own agent. According to Brackenbury Chamberlain's main concern was the fact that as the ammunition was Mark V they could not sell it to anyone else and he therefore felt that the War Office 'had a duty' to buy it rather than leave his firm out of pocket.⁷⁹

Inspection was important but it was sometimes taken too far. At one stage a whole consignment of uniforms was rejected on the grounds that there was a slight difference in colour.⁸⁰ Such high demands led to a clash with the Financial Secretary, Powell-Williams. He believed that a lot of the supply problems that were being faced could be solved if the inspections were less demanding. He did have a point, as the previous example illustrates, but there were other more serious shortcomings. For example Brackenbury demanded straight-grained wood for the spokes on wheels. To

Powell-Williams this seemed excessive but as they were to be fitted on artillery and heavy-laden wagons, their strength was all-important.⁸¹ It was a basic conflict between military and civilian viewpoints, with the civilian not understanding the heavy wear and tear that the equipment would undergo. Another objection that Powell-Williams raised was Brackenbury's rejection of wooden picketing and tent pegs. Brackenbury explained that the pegs would have to be hammered into the dry veldt and removed, on average at least twice a day. If they were to break the tents could become useless, and worse, if a picketing peg went a unit could lose all its horses. The problem also applied to picks, hammers and entrenching tools that were made to commercial patterns. Most were designed for gardening in the soft soil of England not the hard, dry veldt of South Africa. In this point the Commander-in-Chief in South Africa Lord Roberts supported Brackenbury's objections.⁸² Another instance where the standard mattered was horseshoes. Brackenbury initially issued instructions to refuse anything that was not of the highest standard, because the majority of horses were being shod for the first time. Desperation later led him to accept anything that would not lame the animal.

Brackenbury's evidence to the Mowatt Committee shows that he felt that Alfred Major, Director of Army Contracts, and the trade just wanted to give him what was easiest and cheapest to make. In Major's defence it can be said that this was in reality what was expected of him. At a time when demand was urgent and the cost of the war was escalating the merit of Major's position can be seen. There were undoubtedly occasions where the inspection process was far too vigorous, and items were refused that would have been satisfactory. Even despite the rigorous inspections there were quite celebrated cases of defective items being sent to South Africa. Major for his

part, in his evidence to the Mowatt Committee, claimed that his main concern was the fear that if commercial patterns were not accepted the army would get no material at all whether, “good, bad or indifferent”.⁸³ On this point he undoubtedly acted out of the best of motives, but once again there was an illustration of the problem of civilian control not understanding the difficulties of military campaigns. Brackenbury was prepared to accept material out of necessity that was below the standards that had been set but he was not prepared to send material that would, as he said, be liable to “breakdown, simply to please the trade”.⁸⁴

Ammunition

One of the obvious results of the despatching overseas of the largest force ever to leave this country up to that point was the unprecedented demand for ammunition. When General Sir George White asked for 4 million rounds of small arms ammunition to be sent out to South Africa in October 1899, he was cabled back the next day to check that the amount was correct!⁸⁵ If this seemed excessive to the War Office it soon became common, as by the end of November 1899 18 million rounds of ammunition had been sent. This was on top of the ammunition that troops carried with them to South Africa, which by the end of the year 1899 was calculated at some 30 million rounds in total. By the end of November 1899 the weekly supply that the army in South Africa needed was 3.7 million rounds.⁸⁶ As has been seen the trade could not be relied upon to deliver on time, or the correct amount, and the ordnance factories working flat out and including weekends could only produce 1.5 million rounds a week. The reserves of small arms ammunition were in a better state than most. In March 1899 the authorised reserve stood at 151 million rounds, but problems arose just before the war.⁸⁷

The experience of several conflicts, most notably in the Sudanese campaigns and the Chitral Campaign, on the North West Frontier, had shown that the standard Mark II rifle ammunition had insufficient stopping power to halt the more 'fanatical' charges of some of Britain's colonial enemies. Brackenbury, in his evidence to the Elgin Commission, explained that because of this the decision was taken to develop an expanding bullet, which had greater stopping power. The basic principle was that the exit wound was far greater than the entry point and therefore more damage was done to the victim and a greater amount of blood was lost. In short the bullet 'expanded' the wound as it travelled through the body. There were various methods of creating such a bullet. In India what was commonly referred to as the 'Dum Dum' bullet was developed, which had no nickel covering on its tip.⁸⁸ In Britain Mark IV ammunition was produced which had a small hole in the tip of the nickel. Brackenbury told the Elgin Commission that:

We had every intention of using this bullet and making it, in fact, the bullet for the British Army all over the world, and, I think, about 66,000,000 of it up to the 31st March 1899 had been delivered, and formed part of our stock of 172,000, 000.⁸⁹

The Hague Convention of 29th July 1899 outlawed the use of such bullets but because of colonial experiences Britain failed to sign the convention. However there was a feeling within the government that there was a moral obligation to abide by this when fighting a civilised 'white' race like the Boers.

After questions were raised in Parliament an official statement was made stating that the ammunition would not be used, using the moral argument. There was actually a more practical reason that caused the abandonment of Mark IV ammunition. It was found that the bullet, in certain circumstances, had a tendency to 'strip', which is for the lead to squirt through the hole in the nickel envelope, and leave the nickel behind.

In this scenario the next round fired caused a blow back. The particular conditions in which this occurred were when the barrel of the rifle was dirty and hot. As

Brackenbury stated:

Those two conditions of great heat and a dirty rifle were exactly the conditions which were likely to occur in war, and, therefore, it seemed to me, and I so advised the Commander in Chief and the Secretary of State, that none of this ammunition should be considered serviceable for war, and, consequently, 66,000,000, or thereabouts, of our reserve was non-effective for purposes of war.⁹⁰

Whilst Brackenbury felt that the Hague Convention had a certain moral impact on the government he maintained that, “The reason why we did not use the expanding bullet in South Africa was not the Hague Convention, however, but because the Mark IV ammunition, our expanding ammunition, had proved unfit to be used in war”.⁹¹ This perhaps explains the government’s willingness to hide behind the ‘moral obligation’ of the Hague Convention, rather than admit the failure of production. It is difficult not to attach blame to Brackenbury’s predecessor as it is obvious that the ammunition was not tested properly before it was produced on a large scale. It was only during peacetime exercises that the problem was found and it is difficult to conclude anything other than the fact that the ammunition cannot have been given sufficient testing as surely such an obvious fault would have been identified.

Artillery in the South African War

Much has been written about the role of artillery during the war.⁹² In many works that touch briefly on the subject it has been considered sufficiently simply to say that the more modern guns of the Boers outclassed British artillery. There is an element of truth in this as the wealth of the Boer states was such that they could afford to buy the latest French and German weapons. British Artillery on the other hand included a number of old guns, and patterns, many of which, for reasons of economy had modern

technology added to them rather than the purchase of completely new models. Whilst the debate on the role of artillery in South Africa and the consequences of modernisation are beyond the scope of this thesis, Brackenbury's evidence is of interest and deserves comment. His responsibility for artillery was limited, his main task being to make sure that sufficient ammunition was available. Production of artillery equipment was partly his responsibility but the choice of guns and the number of them were only partly within his remit. He had no responsibility for training and tactics, that being the role of the Director of Artillery and the Adjutant-General. He was of course interested as an artilleryman himself and one who had experienced his fair share of combat.

One of the key advantages that Boer Artillery had was that it could fire at longer range than British guns. This was a general fault found with British weapons but never before had it been a problem. Even when firing at such distances had been contemplated, it was difficult to practice anywhere in Britain. The conditions of South Africa made such training essential as climatic and geographical conditions made long-range firing a workable concept. Brackenbury felt that the implication of this was singular because it meant that British troops came under fire long before they could respond and thus morale was weakened. In his evidence to the Elgin Commission he made it quite clear that to the best of his knowledge no engagement was won or any attack repulsed because of the longer range and quicker firing guns possessed by the Boers. Brackenbury's view was that heavy artillery, both Boer and the naval guns of the British, did little serious harm to the enemy during the war, and that the main benefit was that of morale. He told the Elgin Commission that, "Nothing was so astonishing to me, and I think to many others among us, as the extraordinary effect which the presence of these big guns had upon our troops especially the

Cavalry”.⁹³ He also informed them that they had already started experimenting with heavy artillery such as field guns, which could fire a 60lbs shell in excess of 10,000 yards. For Brackenbury the effect on morale was the main reason for the development of such guns at the time but he did not rule out the fact that as technology progressed they would become more effective, as the First World War proved.

Much of Brackenbury’s evidence is unsurprisingly little more than a defence of his own branch of the army. He went into a long explanation of the principles with which the field artillery took the field in South Africa. The key reason why Boer guns outranged British was because the former were generally guns of ‘position’, which had been made mobile, whereas the latter had been designed to move with the army. The key reason for this was that British Artillery was seen largely as being available for a European conflict.⁹⁴ Whilst artillery did serve in any number of colonial campaigns, it was never in large numbers and, as Brackenbury’s evidence showed, the tactics and equipment were designed for battle in Europe, or more accurately to fight European opposition. He stressed that British artillery tactics were based largely on the lessons of the Austro-Prussian War, the Franco-Prussian War and the Russo-Turkish War. He reminded the Commission that Britain had not fought a major campaign with breach loading guns, and thus such conflicts were the best guide for the British. These conflicts had proved, in the view of those in authority in the army, that guns needed to be pushed forward and fired as closely as possible to maximise their effect. In short they needed to be mobile. This was the way the Prussians had been successful in their conflicts, and when the Russians had tried to use their guns at long range they had found that their infantry got little or no support as a consequence. A wider point must be made that British battle tactics in general saw the engagement

ending in an infantry charge. Guns and cavalry were largely there to make this possible and to finish off an enemy once the bayonet charge had won the battle, not to win the battle on their own. As a result the British Army's Artillery Drill Book of 1896 stated that the range for 'distant' fire was 3,500 to 2,500 yards. The Infantry Drill book of 1896 laid down that despite the claims of artillery officers that their guns were effective beyond 3,000 yards; there was no need to practice this as it was beyond the range of support for the infantry. Even the German Field Service Regulations of 1900 stated that 3,300 yards was the range that artillery fire became effective and thus fire beyond that range was unnecessary.⁹⁵ It was believed that the physical effect would be small and not worth the wastage of ammunition. Again there was the geographical point that in Europe conditions would rarely allow guns to be used at such distances, except in sieges for which purpose a siege train was maintained. However in the veldt such conditions existed.

Brackenbury continually emphasised in his evidence that the only major effect of long-range fire was on morale.

In spite of the peculiar features of the Boer gun and of the country, it cannot be said that long range artillery fire was proved to be effective. It did not secure the success of any attack that was seriously resisted; it never repulsed any determined advance. The moderate range-fire of our guns did both, and those who have studied numbers of reports from South Africa can have no doubt whatever of the very great value to our Army of our field artillery fire.⁹⁶

Brackenbury was trying to defend British tactics against knee-jerk reactions to the peculiar and unique conditions of South Africa, and appreciate the value of long-range fire. He refused to enter into any further debate about tactics used by the artillery in South Africa. He correctly pointed out to the Commission that tactics, in the form of the Drill Book, was the responsibility of the Adjutant-General's Department. One of the key reasons for the Boer success with artillery was their use

of indirect fire, that is firing from concealed position or at least from positions where they could not see the target. The British stuck to the principle of direct fire and placed their guns in the open, which with the accurate long range rifle fire of the Boer Mauser rifles proved devastating, most notably at the battle of Colenso. Boer success with artillery was in fact short-lived. Even in the early days of the war they were outnumbered three to one, and British numbers continued to grow whilst the Boers could not replace their guns.

Brackenbury had tried to take action to reform and improve the artillery during the war. As early as November 1899 he had directed the Ordnance Committee to, in his words, “push on with the question of obtaining a satisfactory time fuse effective up to longer ranges than those then in service”.⁹⁷ By January 1900 4,000 of these fuses were ready for despatch to South Africa. They had a twenty-one second fuse, which would cover 6,400 yards before the explosion. The other thing that Brackenbury wanted to obtain was an efficient quick-firing gun for the field artillery. The simple definition of a quick firer was a gun where there was a system in place to ‘absorb’ the recoil, and thus avoid having to relay after each round was fired. In achieving this he was helped by the fact that the majority of artillery officers who had gained experience in South Africa were amongst the first to return home, as their presence was not deemed necessary for the ‘guerrilla’ phase of the war.

This was something that he had been interested in when President of the Ordnance Board, but acting only in an advisory capacity he had only been able to look at the designs that were sent to him. None of them proved acceptable. A stopgap measure was introduced whereby an axle spade was added to the gun, but this only checked the recoil. It did not make the gun a true quick firer, but it certainly made it considerably

quicker in terms of rate of fire. The system was fitted to all the guns that were sent to South Africa. The Boer guns were capable of firing 10 or 12 rounds a minute, although Brackenbury felt that only 6 or 8 would be possible with aimed fire.⁹⁸ The average of the British guns in trials at Okehampton was only 4 rounds of aimed fire. It must be added that there is no evidence to suggest that rapidity of fire had any significant influence in any engagement during the war but had the Boers possessed more guns or had Britain been fighting a European power it may well have proved vital.

Brackenbury attempted to find designs amongst British manufacturers that were satisfactory, but he could not find one complete system to meet his standards. He then took the slightly controversial step of gaining government permission to obtain a quick firing gun from Germany. The deal was kept secret for a variety of reasons. We have already seen that there was concern over the dependence of the army on overseas equipment. Added to this was the fact that Germany was increasingly starting to look like a potential enemy. It would also have been a blow to British prestige to admit that British industry was not up to the task of supplying modern equipment to the army. A government that was already under pressure over the conduct of the war and the state of the army would not want questions raised about the 'might' of British industry. The Germans were also keen to keep the deal secret as there was growing anti-British feeling in Germany which was being fuelled by the South African War. The War Office placed an order with Rheinische Metallwaaren und Maschinenfabrik of Dusseldorf for 108 guns, limbers and ammunition wagons.⁹⁹ The company had until that point been unknown as gun manufacturers, yet they produced a gun where the top carriage took up the recoil, so that the wheels remained stationary and thus the gun did not need to be relayed. Brackenbury wrote that the recoil was taken up so well

that during firing a coin could be placed on the wheel and not be knocked off by the action of the gun. The new gun never served in South Africa but it equipped the army at Aldershot and meant that invasion fears were alleviated a little by the knowledge that the very latest modern guns were in service, but it had many problems and because it was completely unlike anything the artillery had seen before it took them some time to get used to it. This gun was never meant for long-term service, but it made Britain one of the few nations at that time to have genuine quick-firing field artillery. It also gave the British manufacturers something to work from.

Lord Roberts wrote that the German built guns had “advanced us by five if not ten years in our knowledge of what field guns might do”.¹⁰⁰ It was from the trials with this gun that Brackenbury, in July 1901, drew up the conditions to be met for the new quick-firing gun for the Horse and Field artillery, which envisaged a gun firing an 18lb shell at up to 6,000 yards with a 16-degree elevation. Brackenbury listed in order of importance the features that were needed for the new gun with priority being given to shell power, ballistics and rapidity of aimed firepower.¹⁰¹ There were delays with the rearmament and the order was finally placed in December 1904 only after a sustained campaign in the press. Again this illustrates the effect the war had. It gave motivation to the process of rearmament that would have been lacking otherwise, but more than this it had led to a public and press outcry that it had not yet taken place only four years after the first quick-firing guns had been received.¹⁰² Such a campaign on behalf of the Army would never have happened before the war. It showed not just what an impact the war had on the image and popularity of the Army, but also the increase in the importance of the Army that the war had shown was necessary.

Conclusion

The course and conduct of the war was such that demands were made on the military machine that had never been seriously considered prior to 1899. It is not the purpose of this study to look at why this was so, but to look at Brackenbury's role in how these demands were met dealt with. A key area was that of ammunition. Mention has already been made of the incredulity with which the War Office replied to Sir George White's request for 4 million rounds in October 1899, yet orders far beyond this were later received. At its height some 3.7 million rounds a week were needed to maintain the army in South Africa. In such a situation reserves were quickly exhausted as the ordnance factories and the trade were struggling to meet the demands. In fact, it was only after the expansion of the new plant at the ordnance factories that the situation was brought under control. It was not simply a fault of the supply system. The trade quickly proved that they could not be relied upon, because commercial interests were quite understandably driving the large majority of them, and the ordnance factories could only produce 1.5 million rounds a week working flat out including weekends. In such a situation the reserves were quickly used up, and Brackenbury took steps to try and cope with this. He stopped the shipping of ammunition to all other commands and raided the supplies of overseas garrisons. Gibraltar and Malta supplied about 8 million round between them. The situation deteriorated to the extent that the General Officer Commanding in Malta was ordered by Lord Lansdowne to disarm the garrison if necessary to provide ammunition for South Africa.¹⁰³

By March 1900 the reserves held in Britain had run out and, according to Brackenbury, "there were just three boxes of ammunition in the entire country".¹⁰⁴ Fortunately that was as bad as it got. The new plant at Woolwich and the borrowing

of ammunition from all over the Empire had given the trade time to catch up, a delay which was caused largely by their need to retool to produce the new pattern of ammunition. Saying that it was the excessive demand that was the biggest problem sums up the basic ammunition situation. The orders received were far beyond that which had been considered possible before-hand.

All this was not without consequences for the ordnance factories. The wear and tear caused by the increased production made Brackenbury's proposed replacement of plant not only desirable but also essential. By the end of 1899 things were at breaking point for both men and machines and had it not been for Brackenbury's persuasion of a reluctant Army Board to close the factories for five days over Christmas, there might have been a total collapse.¹⁰⁵ The work of the ordnance factories was excellent and they did all they could under the circumstances. The irony was that the trade was meant to cover up for the deficiencies in the ordnance factories, but it ended up the other way around. The factories were worked hard, and plant increased, because of the unreliability of large sectors of the trade. The change in control of the ordnance factories was vindicated by the South African War, where Brackenbury's overall control, and more to the point the de facto control of spending he was given, prevented the large scale collapse in supply which would inevitably have come if he had had to work through the procedures and rigours of the highly bureaucratic War Office purchasing system. In time of war the Financial Secretary was an unnecessary intermediary who did nothing but delay purchase of equipment. The system of reporting expenditure as soon as possible to the Army Board and then following it up with the necessary paperwork at a later stage, that Brackenbury adopted, with the permission of the Secretary of State for War, was vital in maintaining the supply of the army in South Africa. It will be remembered that without this burden Brackenbury

was only just able to keep the Army supplied; with the added bureaucracy, and more to the point the added time that this entailed, it is doubtful it could have been achieved. There was only one accounting system, with no provision being made for the rigours and immediate demands of war. In the early days of the war the department attempted to carry on with this system, and it has been suggested that this attempt may account for the number of nervous breakdowns that were suffered amongst the staff of the department.¹⁰⁶ Brackenbury also had to contend with the fact that no plans existed for the expansion of the factories in time of war because of the belief in the ability of the trade to produce anything at any notice. He soon found that this was not realistic and as a result the ordnance factories had to be expanded and foreign suppliers, of which his department had no prior knowledge or experience, had to be used.

Artillery ammunition was also subject to unprecedented demands during the war. Before the war the total reserve of 15pdr shells in Natal was 5,000 but in the early engagements an estimated 1,000 shells were fired in a day. Brackenbury underestimated the weekly demand for shells and General Buller asked for almost double what Brackenbury had planned to send out.¹⁰⁷ Two things come out of this. First that Brackenbury, his department, and the War Office in general were into uncharted territory, and second that Brackenbury's experience as an artillery officer probably meant that he was better able to envisage such demands than a non-gunner. Very few, if any, artillery officers would have contemplated engagements where batteries were firing 1,000 shells a day. Brackenbury did his best to keep the level of supply maintained. The demands were such that it was calculated that the reserve would be used up in two months. Brackenbury took shells from wherever he could

find them. Batteries still in the British Isles had their stocks raided to the extent that in February 1900 the only field gun ammunition still in Britain were the remaining rounds in the limbers of the batteries.¹⁰⁸ Brackenbury deliberately sent out guns to South Africa that he knew could be supplied from Royal Navy stocks but he saw the danger of such a move. It was undoubtedly his evidence to the Mowatt Committee that led that body to conclude that:

The time might come when the country would find itself simultaneously engaged in a great war by sea and by land, during which India and the Navy so far from being able to lend to the Army, might themselves have to make very heavy demands.¹⁰⁹

Despite all the problems there is no account of the guns ever falling silent for want of ammunition.

There were many problems in supplying the troops but despite this the quality of the equipment supplied was remarkably good. Andrew Page concluded that:

The quality of the stores provided is difficult to assess. However apart from swords lances and pistols, most items had more defenders than detractors. It is easy and entertaining to amass a list of absurdities (helmets and saddles that disintegrated in the rain, caps so inadequate that dozens of troops could get sunstroke on Salisbury plain, rifles where the butt fell off if it got too hot, and so on) but to do so is misleading. Most stores, including most headgear, saddles and rifles, were perfectly serviceable. Occasions where there was a shortage of stores, or those provided were of poor quality, were publicised by those expecting, perhaps subconsciously hoping for, another example of administrative chaos like the Crimean War.¹¹⁰

In a memorandum of January 1904 Brackenbury, soon to leave the War Office, wrote that much of the reserve had been established.¹¹¹ He was 250 guns short of the required reserve but 78 were on order and another 100 had been budgeted for in the army estimates of 1904-05. He also reported that 233,000 rifles were missing from the reserve. This was accounted for by an unprecedented demand from India, due to the reorganisation that Lord Kitchener was undertaking and the fact that the department was still recovering from the war. The fact that the reserve had not been completed

two years after the end of the South African War should not be regarded too harshly as such success as there was had been due only to Brackenbury persuading the cabinet to re-equip over three years as opposed to the usual ten. He could also point to the fact that the amount of small arms ammunition in reserve was over the authorised figure.

The South African War took a considerable toll on the health of Sir Henry Brackenbury and it will be remembered that by the end of the war he was sixty-four. His department had to deal with supplying an army ten times the size of that for which it had been set up. Page best sums up his achievements:

...He insisted on the change in control of the factories, did his best to ensure that contracts were adhered to, first recommended a general policy of buying abroad, expanded the Ordnance Factories as far as he was allowed and overrode the paralysing delays of War Office accounting. Neither he nor anyone could create in a moment productive capacity to meet any demand, and this was really what the pre-war system, with inadequate reserves required.¹¹²

There was no repeat of the collapse of supplies to South Africa as there had been in the Crimean War. In fact the main supply problems were in South Africa itself, especially after Kitchener's attempt to centralise all transport had failed. Brackenbury and his department, whilst trying to undertake a series of reforms and changes and cope with the series of committees that were set up, managed to keep up the supply and maintenance of the largest army that Britain had ever had up to that point. The strain on Brackenbury and his department was enormous and on the 15th December 1902 he offered his resignation on the grounds of ill-health saying, "I had become sleepless and nervous, and was no longer fit to carry on responsible work".¹¹³ He informed the Commander-in-Chief, now Lord Roberts, and the Secretary of State for War, Mr St John Brodrick, that he intended to resign from the 1st January 1903. It is worth observing that by now the war was over, but the reforms continued.

I have a great longing for rest, but on the other hand I have a strong desire myself to see through the work begun in 1899. By the end of March 1904, the modern armament of our fortresses should be complete, and we should have everything ready in the ordnance stores and clothing to equip an army of 135,000 men for service abroad, and maintain them in the field for 6 months. You will understand that I want to see this through, lest anything should slip before it is accomplished.¹¹⁴

Brackenbury was persuaded, largely by Broderick, to stay on until the end of his five-year term in 1904. He agreed, but was ordered to go on leave until February in an attempt to recover. It has been said of Brackenbury that:

His contribution to the successful prosecution of the war, and the placing of the army on a sounder footing after it, probably exceeded that of any other single individual.¹¹⁵

Brackenbury was left out of the honours that followed the war, although when he retired he was appointed a Privy Councillor. The reason for his omission is claimed to be because the King feared that awarding an honour to a Head of Department during the war would cheapen the honours system. The Secretary of State for War, by this time H.O. Arnold-Forster, felt Brackenbury deserved an award, but Arnold-Forster wrote "I acquiesce (to the King) having no option". Arnold-Forster had written to the Prime Minister Balfour, who had succeeded Salisbury in 1902, about Brackenbury saying that:

He has done the state splendid service. I should like him to receive a distinguished mark of favour. He has no children and in my opinion a peerage would be an appropriate and not excessive reward.¹¹⁶

Arnold-Forster was a great admirer of Brackenbury's skill and also wrote to Balfour that, "Brackenbury to my great regret is leaving us in a few weeks".¹¹⁷ No doubt Brackenbury also regretted the fact that he was leaving just as secretaries of state were coming along with mandates to carry out so many of the reforms that he had championed during his career. Only a matter of months after he left the army in 1904 the office of Commander-in-Chief was abolished and replaced by a Chief of

Staff. Arnold-Forster wrote to Brackenbury on the occasion of his retirement:

“I am permitted to inform you that the King proposes to mark the conclusion of your great career by summoning you to the Privy Council. I am told that under the circumstances this honour is exceptional, to which I can only reply that the services have been exceptional”.¹¹⁸

It is easy to condemn the lack of foresight within the army but no one in the War Office had any experience of a conflict on such a scale. Even the Crimean War is not a fair comparison in size. The South African War was a ‘wake up call’ for the army and politicians alike. It made many realise the demands of modern warfare. Whilst there were still great failures of the military machine in the First World War, the army took the field in far better shape because of the South African experiences. It can be argued that the problems of the First World War came about largely after the conflict had changed in size again. Before South Africa, the Army had prepared for conflicts using tens of thousands of troops at most. South Africa brought about the realisation that it needed to be prepared for hundreds of thousands of troops at the very least. The supply problems of the First World War came when it had changed yet again to million of troops.

Notes

¹ Kochanski, Halik *Sir Garnet Wolseley: Victorian Hero* (London: Hambledon Press, 1999), p209.

² A copy of his findings are found in the Appendices to the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa (Elgin Commission) and are quoted from later in this chapter.

³ Officially known as the *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the military preparations and other matters connected with the War in South Africa* (London: H.M.S.O, 1903). It is often confused with Lord Esher's *War Office Reconstitution Committee* (London: H.M.S.O, 1904). The confusion is not helped by the fact that many contemporary authors referred to the Royal Commission as the Esher Commission. Lord Elgin was third choice for chairman, after Lord Spencer and Mr Herbert Asquith, had both declined. Unsurprisingly therefore Elgin very much played second fiddle to Lord Esher. This suited Esher, as he liked to work behind the scenes, and later turned down the appointment of Secretary of State for War for that reason.

⁴ For an example of this see the evidence of Lord Wolseley, Lord Lansdowne. Also see any commander with field experience i.e. Buller, Kelly-Kenny, White, e.t.c.

⁵ The claim that the officers had been close to mutiny over this matter was made by Lord Wolseley in a letter to Lady Wolseley 28th March 1885, Wolseley Papers, Central Library Hove.

⁶ Lord Wolseley to Lady Wolseley 28th March 1885, Wolseley papers, Central Library Hove.

⁷ Judd, Denis and Surridge, Keith *The Boer War* (London: John Murray, 2002), pp.35-38.

⁸ Two of the best, although by no means the only, accounts of the fallout from the Jameson Raid can be found in Farwell, Byron *The Great Boer War* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), pp.23-27 and Pakenham, Thomas *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979) Chapter 2. These devote whole chapters rather than mere sections as in most modern accounts. Of the more recent histories Judd, Denis & Surridge, Keith *The Boer War* has good detail of the Boer political response and Smith Ian *The Origins of the South African War 1899-1902* (London: Longmans Press, 1996), speaks for itself. However nothing really equates to the sheer scale of Pakenham, who writes 122 pages before he gets to the beginning of the war. Whilst quantity does not always equate to quality in this case it does.

⁹ Judd, Denis and Surridge, Keith *The Boer War*, pp.44-48. See also Lowry, Donal (editor) *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). In particular John Benyon's chapter 'Intermediate' imperialism and the test of Empire: Miliner's 'excentric' High Commission in South Africa', pp.84-104.

¹⁰ Beckett, Ian 'The Victorians at War' (London: Hambledon Press, 2003), pp.197-198. Also see O'Brien, Jim 'The Second Anglo-Boer War: Getting There' *Soldiers of the Queen, Journal of The Victorian Military History Society*, Issue 112 (March 2003), Stone, Jay & Schmidl, Erwin *The Boer War and Military Reforms* (London: University Publications of America, 1988), pp.25-26.

¹¹ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902' PhD Thesis University of Oxford, 1976, p.40 & Beckett, Ian *The Victorian at War*, pp.197-199.

¹² The exact number of Boers mobilised at any one time is difficult to know, but this is a reasonable figure, although the British sources at the time put it closer to 50,000 to 60,000, but this would be the entire mobilised force rather than what confronted the British forces.

¹³ Historians continue to be divided over the role and performance of General White. Pakenham, Thomas *The Boer War* attacked White as part of his defence of Buller, and tries to portray Buller as a scapegoat for the disasters of the war. Cotzer, Owen *The Anglo-Boer War: The Road to Infamy* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1996), defends the role of White and his decision to invest Ladysmith and wait for a siege. Whilst this judgement was questionable, it was the only 'mistake' White made, whereas Buller made a considerable number.

¹⁴ When in command of large attacking forces during manoeuvres Buller was beaten on two separate occasions by Grierson, Brackenbury's former protégé in the Intelligence Branch, and the Duke of Connaught. Whilst this highlights the ability of the two opposing Generals it does, and perhaps should have, raised questions about Buller's ability to lead a large formation beyond his personal control.

¹⁵ Stead, W.T *How Britain Goes to War* (London: Review of Reviews, 1903), p.210. Stead was one of the so-called Pro-Boers, which simply meant he opposed the war. This was surprising, as before the conflict he had made a reputation as the archetypal imperialist. *How Britain Goes to War* is a detailed analysis of the Report of the Elgin Commission, and in that respect is useful. Unfortunately it is entirely politically motivated, and Stead makes no attempt to hold any of the soldiers responsible, laying the blame squarely with Lansdowne and Chamberlain.

¹⁶ Page gives a wonderful list of all the things that now annoyed the failing and erratic Wolseley. "Irishmen, Catholics, M.P's, Priests, Americans, Germans, doctors, Lord Roberts, Lady Roberts, Ireland, Sir William Russell (war correspondent), Henry Labouchere, Sir William Harcourt, The Duke of Cambridge (even in retirement), Gladstone, peacetime, age, Lord Chelmsford, Sir Edward Hamley, Sir Redvers Buller, Sir Evelyn Wood and the French".

¹⁷ Quoted in Farwell, Byron *The Great Boer War*, p.86.

¹⁸ After the defeat of the battle of Colenso Buller signalled to White that he would not be able to reach him for at least a month. He stated that White should hold out for as long as he could. The damaging part was that he went on to say, "after which I suggest you firing away as much ammunition as you can and making the best terms you can". When, after the war, this telegram became public it was a further, and important, nail in Buller's coffin.

¹⁹ One of the most recent records of this perceived prejudice can be found in Lee, John *A Soldiers Life; General Sir Ian Hamilton 1853-1947* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000) pp.22-23 & 33. Hamilton was particularly bitter, but ignored the fact that had it not been for Buller's personal intervention he would not have been able to serve in the Sudan during the Gordon Relief Expedition. Hamilton's conduct in going out to the seat of war in a private capacity was the sort of behaviour that was generally frowned upon. Buller however needed a good officer for the Gordon Highlanders, and despite the fact it was against regulations appointed Hamilton. He never received any thanks or credit from Hamilton for that.

²⁰ Carver, Field Marshal Lord *The National Army Museum Book of The Boer War* (London: Pan Books, 2000), p.259.

²¹ *Royal Commission on the War in South Africa* (Elgin Commission) Minutes of Evidence (London H.M.S.O, 1903), p.83.

- ²² Dunlop, Colonel John *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914* (London: Methuen Press, 1938), p.84.
- ²³ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.71.
- ²⁴ The Ordnance Factories consisted of six factories. The Royal Laboratory, The Royal Carriage Factory, The Royal Gun Factory (all based at Woolwich), The Gunpowder Factory at Waltham Abbey, and the two Small Arms factories at Enfield and Birmingham.
- ²⁵ Brackenbury used the phrase in Evidence to the *Elgin Commission*, p.84 and in a letter to Colonel Clarke quoted at the 'Committee of Inquiry into Ordnance Officers in South Africa', PRO WO32/7026.
- ²⁶ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.71.
- ²⁷ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.72.
- ²⁸ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902' Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oxford (1976).
- ²⁹ Chamberlain to Balfour, 2nd February 1899, Balfour Papers, British Library Mss Add 49683.
- ³⁰ A story telling now Gladstone had not forgiven, or at least not forgotten, Brackenbury by 1892 is told in Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, (1909), pp.347-348.
- ³¹ The debate surrounding the transfer is cover in greater depth in Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', pp.172-175.
- ³² Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', pp.174-175. The four reports were the Stephen Commission, Ridley Commission, Morley Commission and the Hartington Commission.
- ³³ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.176.
- ³⁴ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.179.
- ³⁵ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.77.
- ³⁶ For details of Lord Lansdowne's instructions see *Elgin Commission*, p.77 and for details of new factories and plant see Page, Andrew, 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.200.
- ³⁷ Report by Director-General of Ordnance to Commander-in Chief 15th December 1899. This was included as Appendix E of the *Elgin Commission*., pp.278-280. Brackenbury was ordered to send this report direct to Lord Lansdowne, rather than through War Office channels. Technically he had the authority to do this under the existing Order in Council, but the old system of all material going through the Commander-in-Chief still prevailed on the whole. Lansdowne wanted the document so he could take it to the Cabinet to support his case.
- ³⁸ All the figures in this section are taken from Report by Director General of Ordnance to Commander-in-Chief, 15th December 1899, pp.278-281.
- ³⁹ Many of these were still Webley products, just not the service pattern of revolver, although the Mauser C96 was popular with both sides.
- ⁴⁰ Brackenbury gave a full account of this incident to the *Elgin Commission*, p.86.
- ⁴¹ Sir Ralph Thompson originally made this point in his evidence to the Mowatt Committee and Lord Lansdowne and Sir Ralph Thompson, the Permanent Secretary of the War Office, made this point in their evidence to the Elgin Commission.
- ⁴² Report by Director General of Ordnance to Commander-in-Chief, 15th December 1899, p.279.
- ⁴³ Report by Director General of Ordnance to Commander-in-Chief, 15th December 1899, p.279.
- ⁴⁴ Report by Director General of Ordnance to Commander-in-Chief, 15th December 1899, pp.279-80.
- ⁴⁵ Report by Director General of Ordnance to Commander-in-Chief, 15th December 1899, pp.279-80.
- ⁴⁶ Brackenbury to Roberts 18th January 1900. Roberts Papers. National Army Museum.
- ⁴⁷ Report by Director General of Ordnance to Commander-in-Chief, 15th December 1899, p. 279.
- ⁴⁸ *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Reserves of guns, stores for the Army* (Mowatt Committee) British Library, Add. 50306.
- ⁴⁹ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence, Evidence of Lord Lansdowne*. Question 21280.
- ⁵⁰ Report by Director General of Ordnance to Commander-in-Chief, 15th December 1899, pp.279-80.
- ⁵¹ The only M.P called was Mr J. Powell-Williams, the Financial Secretary at the War Office. The witnesses from 'the Trade' were: Sir Andrew Noble, Director of Armstrong and Whitworth & Co Ltd. Mr Albert Vickers and Mr Douglas Vickers, Managing Directors of Messrs Vickers & Sons & Maxim. Mr A.T. Dawson, Director and Superintendent of Ordnance at Messrs Vickers & Sons & Maxim. Mr C.T. Cayley, Managing Director of Messrs Hadfields Steel Foundry Company. Mr Bernard. A. Firth,

Managing Director Thomas Firth & Sons Ltd. Mr R.A. Hadfield, Chairman and Managing Director of Hadfields Steel Foundry Company. Mr Arthur Chamberlain, Chairman of Messrs Kynoch & Co.

⁵² *Mowatt Committee*, pp.I-XIII.

⁵³ *Mowatt Committee*, p.XIII.

⁵⁴ *Mowatt Committee*, p.XIII has all the calculations and comes at the end of the Committees recommendations.

⁵⁵ See, Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', pp.349-352 for more details of the cabinet wrangling over this issue.

⁵⁶ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.182.

⁵⁷ Proceedings of the Army Board, 3rd November 1899, PRO WO108/79.

⁵⁸ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.186.

⁵⁹ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.74.

⁶⁰ The guns could only fire 250 rounds before they would wear out. Thus a thousand rounds were purchased, but they were never fired in action. They were sent to South Africa, and had been bought to besiege Pretoria, but that was not necessary. Two were despatched to China during the Boxer Rebellion, but were never used.

⁶¹ Proceedings of the Army Board, 25th November 1899, PRO WO108/79.

⁶² The firm had been established as an engineering works by a Scotsman called George Kynoch. After he hit financial problems other investors joined the company most notably Arthur Chamberlain. By 1899 he was Chairman and many of the other investors had been persuaded to step down from the board and other members of the Chamberlain family joined the board. Arthur Chamberlain concentrated the business on arms manufacturing and succeed in turning around a £50,000 overdraft.

⁶³ *Mowatt Committee*, p.10.

⁶⁴ *Mowatt Committee*, p.ix.

⁶⁵ Brackenbury to Balfour, 23rd January 1900, Balfour Papers, British Library Add Mss 49683.

⁶⁶ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.188.

⁶⁷ *Mowatt Committee*, pp.78-79.

⁶⁸ *Mowatt Committee*, p.79.

⁶⁹ *Mowatt Committee*, p.80.

⁷⁰ *Mowatt Committee*, p.79.

⁷¹ *Mowatt Committee*, pp.68-69.

⁷² *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, pp.146-154. Elements of Colonel Richardson's evidence have been used in, O'Brien Jim: 'The Anglo-Boer War: Soap and Tinned Meat' *Soldiers of the Queen: The Journal of the Victorian Military Society*, Issue No125 (June 2006), pp.19-22.

⁷³ *Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence*, pp.148-149. This story is supported by Wilson H.W *After Pretoria: The Guerrilla Campaign* Volume I (London: Amalgamated Press, 1902), p.76.

⁷⁴ *Mowatt Committee*, pp.85-86.

⁷⁵ Unfortunately for Lloyd-George he didn't know the most damaging part of Kynochs wartime trading, namely that during the South African War Kynochs, through their South African subsidiary, sold twelve million rounds of ammunition to the Boers.

⁷⁶ Owen, Frank *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd-George his life and times* (London: Hutchinson & co, 1954), p.140.

⁷⁷ Brackenbury to Balfour, 23rd January 1900, Balfour Papers, British Library Add Mss 49683.

⁷⁸ *Mowatt Committee*, pp.86-88.

⁷⁹ *Mowatt Committee*, p.88.

⁸⁰ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', pp.202-203.

⁸¹ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.203.

⁸² Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.204.

⁸³ *Mowatt Committee*, pp.32-33.

⁸⁴ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.203.

⁸⁵ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.194.

-
- ⁸⁶ Report by Director General of Ordnance to Commander-in-Chief, pp.279-280. Also see Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.195.
- ⁸⁷ Report by Director General of Ordnance to Commander-in-Chief, pp.278-279.
- ⁸⁸ Dum Dum has become general terminology for an expanding bullet, but was in fact the name of the factory. This was to cause embarrassment in South Africa when cases of ammunition marked Dum Dum were discovered. They were however not expanding ammunition, but regular ordnance supplied by the Dum Dum factory.
- ⁸⁹ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.74.
- ⁹⁰ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.74.
- ⁹¹ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.74.
- ⁹² Virtually every book on the South African War makes some comment on the quality and performance of British Artillery. Headlam, Maj-General Sir John *The History of the Royal Artillery* Volume II (Woolwich: Royal Artillery Institution, 1937), gives a biased British perspective on their performance, but is interesting none the less. The best and most detailed accounts of the performance of artillery during the war is to be found in the series of articles that Major Darrell Hall wrote for *The Journal of the South African Military History Society*
- ⁹³ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.82.
- ⁹⁴ Brackenbury gives a detailed account of the development of British tactics in his evidence to the *Elgin Commission*, pp.579-582.
- ⁹⁵ The reference to all these regulations is the *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.79.
- ⁹⁶ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.80.
- ⁹⁷ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p.80.
- ⁹⁸ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, pp.84-85.
- ⁹⁹ This was commonly called the Ehrhardt Gun after the engineer who designed it. For further details on the Ehrhardt Gun see Headlam, Major-General Sir John *The History of the Royal Artillery*, pp.113-119, Rogers, H.C.B *Artillery through the Ages* (London: Seeley Service and Co Ltd, 1971) & 'Ordnance and ammunition from Germany'. National Archives WO108/336. The latter is marked 'top secret' and perhaps illustrates the level of secrecy that was used. The latter document suggests that a merchant bank was used as an intermediary, possibly what is now known as the H.S.B.C Group, although because this is all top secret it is not clear.
- ¹⁰⁰ Spiers, Edward: 'Rearming the Edwardian Artillery', *Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research* Volume 57 (1979), p.168.
- ¹⁰¹ Conditions to be fulfilled by a Quick-firing gun for Royal Horse & Field Artillery, 8th July 1901, British Library, Add 50325ff164.
- ¹⁰² Headlam, Maj-General Sir John *The History of the Royal Artillery*, pp.76-77. Parallels can be drawn with the famous 'we want eight and we won't wait' campaign that the press and public took on behalf of the Royal Navy (the eight being the number of new Battleships desired), though it was never as vociferous. There exists a quite famous Punch cartoon concerning this of December 1904. The Times also featured an editorial article on this on 15th December 1904.
- ¹⁰³ Lansdowne to G.O.C in Malta, 27th January 1900, National Archives WO108/66
- ¹⁰⁴ Brackenbury to Balfour, 16th May 1901, Balfour papers, British Library, Add Mss 49683.
- ¹⁰⁵ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.196.
- ¹⁰⁶ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.228.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Elgin Commission Minutes of Evidence*, pp.73-74.
- ¹⁰⁸ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.199.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Mowatt Committee*, p.10.
- ¹¹⁰ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.250.
- ¹¹¹ Report by Director General of Ordnance on the armaments and materials of war 1st January 1904. British Library, Add 50325ff164-177b.
- ¹¹² Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.212.
- ¹¹³ Brackenbury to Wolseley, 26th December 1902, Wolseley papers, Hove Central Library.
- ¹¹⁴ Brackenbury to Wolseley, 26th December 1902, Wolseley papers, Hove Central Library.
- ¹¹⁵ Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South African War 1899-1902', p.354.

¹¹⁶ H.O Arnold-Forster to Balfour, 13th January 1904, Balfour papers British Library Add mss49722.

He was not completely left out of the honours list. His K.C.B was raised to a G.C.B.

¹¹⁷ H.O Arnold-Forster to Balfour, 13th January 1904, Balfour papers British Library Add mss49722.

¹¹⁸ H.O. Arnold-Forster to Brackenbury, 4th February 1904, Arnold-Forster papers, British Library, Add 50336.

Conclusion

As we have shown, Henry Brackenbury had a long and varied career. Although he would have liked to have reached the position of Chief of Staff, it can be said that in many ways he had reached the peak of his profession by the end of his career. He followed a common route into the army, being a younger son of a minor landowning family with something of a military tradition. However the career that followed was far from conventional. His administrative, literary and active service achievements would have stood out individually. In conclusion we will look at his achievements and his impact on the late Victorian army.

His education was a common enough path for a young officer, Tonbridge, Eton and then Woolwich. However, between Eton and Woolwich Brackenbury had an experience which undoubtedly affected his approach to his future career. The almost two years that Brackenbury spent in a notary's office in Quebec had a profound effect on him. That period immersed in a business, indeed professional, atmosphere gave him an experience that few of his contemporaries had. Most officers went straight from education to the army. Brackenbury had a wider experience. Not only had he travelled to part of the empire, he had worked in a profession. He had knowledge of the wider world, and was not blinkered to simply the life of the 'gentry' or soldiering. Although his time there was brief it obviously went a long way to explaining his professional approach to work, and study.

Given this early professional experience, which obviously held some interest for him, it could be considered somewhat surprising that he entered upon a career in the army. It was not the obvious port of call for a young man with a professional approach. It is likely that the reason for his decision was very much linked to his family history. As

he wrote, in 1899, “In three generations sprang from my grandfather, who was himself a soldier, we have given twelve officers to the army including two generals”.¹ This was an obvious family link. Both his father and uncle had been soldiers in the Peninsular War. He can have had little memory of his father, given that he died when Henry was only six years old, but perhaps the little he knew about him concerned his military career. Indeed almost every reference that Henry makes to his father in his literary work is followed by the observation that he was a Peninsular War veteran. An attempt to emulate his father, and uncle, was perhaps part of his motivation for joining the army. Perhaps more relevant was the recent commissioning of his brother Charles into the Royal Artillery. This not only influenced his decision to join the army, but also undoubtedly influenced his choice of the Royal Artillery. It is recorded that Henry visited his brother on several occasions after Charles’ entry into the army. It is extremely likely that Henry saw something in the life that appealed to him on the strength of these visits. There was also a friendly rivalry between them and there appears to be a pattern in their careers. Charles’s active service in the Crimea was a key influence in Henry’s desire to see action in India during the mutiny. It also influenced his desire to witness the Franco-Prussian war at first hand. The influence of his brother in this direction is clear:

My brother Captain (afterwards Major-General) Charles Brackenbury, had acted as a military correspondent for ‘The Times’ in the war of 1866. At the battle of Koeniggratz he had ridden with Benedek into the thick of the fire at Chlum. He had gone on to Italy, and described the naval battle of Lissa and the handing over of Venetia. He had become a personage of some importance, and I was fired with emulation.²

This statement illustrates another important point. He had seen his brother rise in importance through journalism, and through witnessing a continental war. Indeed it was around this time that Henry commenced his own literary career, with his earliest

articles appearing in 1866. Whilst the other reasons for embarking on a literary career have already been examined, such as using his spare time constructively, and financial gain, the fact that he had seen his brother rise in importance due to his career was also an appeal. It must have played a role in his desire to see the Franco-Prussian War at first hand. Initially he witnessed it as a 'tourist', then he wrote about it from London, including the 'Diary of the War', and finally he was right at the front working for the National Aid Society. There were obviously other motivates behind his work, such as patriotism, the chance to enhance his administrative credentials, but there was also a clear desire to help his own career advancement.

This brings us to the nature of Brackenbury's ambition. It is hard to see exactly what his ambition was. This is where the lack of private papers is a problem, as we get no clear picture of whether he initially embarked upon his military career as a means to an end. In short did he intend to make his reputation in the army and then make his 'fortune' elsewhere. This was a common enough occurrence during this period. If that was the original plan it is interesting that he did not leave the army on the occasions that his career appeared to have stalled. If we therefore presume that he always intended to remain in the army and if, as he said, his "heart was in the army" then what was his ambition?³ It is clear that from day one he is attempting to advance his career. His desire, indeed desperation, to see active service should be seen in this light. It was in the field that reputations were made, and the system of promoting officers to high office as a reward for service in the field was to continue for many years. His own career would illustrate this as it was only after his success as a field commander in the Sudan that he was finally appointed to the War Office staff. His literary career was also an attempt to advance his career, and was another way he could get noticed.

Wolseley would later accuse Brackenbury of self-interest and a lack of loyalty and gratitude concerning his military career. There was undoubtedly truth behind this. Wolseley remained convinced that those who had been part of the 'ring' owed him an undying debt of gratitude. However all of them to a lesser or greater extent had made their own careers after his initial help. Wolseley had equal right to be grateful to those members of his ring who had helped to make his name by their supported of his campaigns, and Brackenbury had played a key role in making sure that his campaigns had run smoothly and successfully. Brackenbury was never afraid to use whatever influence he could to help his career along. Active service and writing were all means to an end. In the same way he used his relationship Wolseley, and with Roberts, to help in this process.

Brackenbury also made great use of his political connections. There were several occasions when he used such links to try and obtain future employment in the army. His three key administrative appointments were very much the result of political influence rather than military. His appointment at the Intelligence Branch owed a great deal to the intervention of W.H. Smith the newly appointed, but short-lived, Secretary of State for War. On returning from the Sudan he had found himself promoted to Major General, but unemployed. Brackenbury had used his friendship with the future Lord Egerton, at that time Conservative M.P for Mid-Cheshire, to canvas the support of W.H. Smith for employment at the War Office. Brackenbury recorded that W.H. Smith had said that he "had his eye on Brackenbury" and was keen to employ him at the War Office.⁴ At the same time he was trying to use military contacts to find employment, but without success. Wolseley had tried to have him appointed Deputy Adjutant General and Lord Roberts had been keen to employ him

in India. Neither had been successful. It was also political influence, at Brackenbury's prompting, that obtained his appointment as Military Member in India. He had become concerned that his recent activities, particularly on the Hartington Commission had alienated him from much of the army, particularly Wolseley and the Duke of Cambridge. Brackenbury believed, somewhat justifiably, that his career was over, and that he would simply be reduced to half-pay and not employed again. One can see through his correspondence with Stanhope that he was using all his political contacts to obtain future employment. Knowing that the appointment in India would soon be vacant he wrote to Lord Salisbury, W.H. Smith, Stanhope and Lord Knutsford, urging them all to support his case by writing to Lord Cross, Secretary of State for India.⁵ It is perhaps a mark of his standing by this point that some of the most powerful men in the government were all prepared to write on his behalf, including the Prime Minister. This again leads weight to the argument that it was the politicians who truly appreciated his skills and achievements. Even his final appointment as Director General of Ordnance owed a great deal to political support. The relationship he had built up with Lord Lansdowne, when the latter was Viceroy of India, played a key part in the decision to appoint Brackenbury.

His use of such contacts and influence does suggest a somewhat 'pushy' individual. This was perhaps true, but it could be argued that he did not really have an alternative. He had no power, or influence of his own. He was not a Wolseley or Roberts with a great reputation gained on the battlefield, nor did he have the connections and background of either the Duke of Cambridge or the Duke of Connaught. He was in a difficult position. His real skill lay away from the battlefield. Even his active service career illustrates this. The key work he did was before the battle, it might even be

argued before the campaign, in making sure that the preparation had been done and that the army took the field in the best condition. Even when he commanded the River Column in the Sudan it helped him that it was more a logistical battle than anything else. This was a vital part of a campaign, and indeed soldiering in general, but it was often ignored.

His ideal appointment would have been Chief of Staff. As head of a General Staff he could have planned for future operations, sorted out the administrative system of the army, improved the staff system and generally improved the efficiency of the army. When one sees the improvements in the Intelligence Branch, the Indian Army, and the Ordnance Department, he was able to achieve it can be considered a tragedy that he had not been appointed Chief of Staff in 1891, in line with the Hartington Commission's recommendation, and given the chance in the next eight years before the South African War to have put right much of what was to cause the army and the nation such distress and loss of life in South Africa. To this end it is worth repeating the words of the Esher Committee of 1904 that:

We unhesitatingly assert that if the recommendations of the majority of the Hartington Commission had not been ignored, the country would have been saved the loss of many thousands of lives, and of many millions of pounds, subsequently sacrificed in the South African War... Upon many material points we have done no more than adopt and develop the principles laid down by the Hartington Commission, especially as regards the creation of the branch of a Chief of the General Staff.⁶

Brackenbury was an intellectually gifted officer. His administrative skills were just one part of this. His ability, and more importantly his willingness, to think and study his profession make him stand out in an era when this was not generally the case. The work of Brian Bond and Gwyn Harries Jenkins illustrate just how unusual this was and the work of Edward Spiers has illustrated that even the more gifted officers turned

to the army as a last resort, having failed to enter the civil service, at home or in India, or university or even the legal profession.⁷ However this was an era of change, albeit gradual. The rise of such organisations as the United Service Institute illustrated that there was a growth in study. Yet Brackenbury's hope that the officer would study his profession in the same way as someone did for the law or medicine was still somewhat off.

In Brackenbury it can be argued that we see something of a new style of officer. He was the first officer of truly intellectual leanings to reach high office. Whilst Wolseley recognised the importance of study, he was more inclined to have others do it for him, hence that men like Maurice and Brackenbury were sometimes referred to as 'the pen of Wolseley'. Certainly no one had ever achieved such high office who had written so much concerning his profession. More than this Brackenbury's administrative abilities meant that he was also able to put his ideas into practice when in positions of power. In this way his time at the Intelligence Branch is key. The emphasis was on, study, hard work and professionalism. By doing this he was able to produce an end product that, as we have seen, was on a par with that of their German counterpart, despite the latter's greater manpower and money. Key in this was his appointment of equally professional individuals. It is important to emphasise the role Brackenbury played in the early careers of many of the future leaders of the army. It was he who gave the likes of Robertson, Wilson, Gleichen, Wolfe-Murray, Grierson and others their first chance to really prove themselves at the War Office. From reading their accounts of him you can see that they admired and looked up to him. In many ways he had developed his own 'ring', handpicking his own staff out of those best suited for the role.

The fact that Brackenbury, or a member of his family, failed to write an autobiography dealing with his military career mean that most of his own thoughts have been lost. It would have been intriguing to have read his account of the work he did at the Intelligence Branch, in India and as Director General of Ordnance. The problem of this is that to a large extent we have to go on the accounts left by others. Had he himself recorded it the achievements of his career would have been read, analysed and criticised by historians. Too often his point of view is lost and has been replaced in the historiography by another persons view about him. Despite the fact that his final appointment at the War Office meant that his career had reached par with Evelyn Wood or Redvers Buller, in that he was a member of the army Council and holder of one of the top jobs at the War Office, his achievements have gone unrecorded.

The reforms he had put in place in the Intelligence Branch and Ordnance Department, paid dividends during the South African War. Indeed, the few areas of the army that came out of the war with any credit attached to them owed it largely to Brackenbury. The mobilisations scheme worked extremely well, and the ease and efficiency of it was a surprise to all. Whilst Ardagh deserved credit for the work he had done in fine-tuning the scheme, it was essentially Brackenbury's scheme that allowed the army to mobilise and deploy to South Africa with such relative ease. It was his perseverance with the scheme, despite many problems, that had brought it to fruition. Although strongly criticised at the time the Royal Commissions into the war exonerated the Intelligence Branch. They found that the Intelligence provided had been extremely accurate and that it was a failure higher up the chain of command that was to blame. The accuracy of their reports was credit to the reforms and system of intelligence gathering that Brackenbury had introduced.

Even his work at the Ordnance Department was a successful part of the war. Given all the problems faced it is remarkable that the department, and the supply system in general, did not collapse under the strain of the conflict. That it worked as well as it did was down to the reforms that Brackenbury was able to introduce during the war itself. As Wolseley recorded:

Had he never accomplished anything else for the State than the great service he rendered England throughout our recent and curiously prolonged war in South Africa, he might indeed be well satisfied with what he had done for his country. I do not know an officer who could have performed equally well the heavy and responsible duties which fell to his lot at the War Office during the last three years.⁸

He was helped by two factors. Firstly, Lansdowne's willingness to give him licence to do as he wished. This was undoubtedly helped by Lansdowne's experience at first hand of Brackenbury's administrative ability in India. Had Brackenbury not been given the free role he enjoyed under Lansdowne it is likely he would have been unable to achieve what he did. Secondly, the fact that he was appointed only a matter of months before war broke out meant that he was free from blame for the state his department was in. To this end he was again thankful to Lansdowne who made it clear to the Elgin Commission that Brackenbury had been brought in to completely reform the department, and laid the blame for the state it was in clearly at the doorstep of Brackenbury's predecessor.⁹

In looking at the life and military career of Henry Brackenbury it is quite clear that here was a man of great intelligence, brilliant administrative skill and with an understanding of tactical, technical and scientific military matters that was beyond many of his contemporaries. Even within the group of bright young officers that formed the 'Wolseley ring' his ability stood out. His literary career was extraordinary,

and the amount of material he produced was almost akin to that of a professional journalist. Indeed there were times when his writing seemed to take up more of his time than his military work. Yet his literary output should not be viewed as the product of a lifetime. Indeed his literary career only began in 1865 and by 1878 he was no longer writing regularly. After that year he only contributed occasional articles and books. The value of his literary career to both his financial security and career advancement cannot be ignored. As Brackenbury wrote "I attribute to a great extent whatever measure of success I had in my profession to it".¹⁰ It was his literary work that led to his being asked to work for the National Aid Society, and this and his literary work brought him to the attention of Wolseley. As a consequence he enjoyed a considerable active service career that would have been the envy of many of his contemporaries. This in turn led to his opportunity to undertake key administrative positions in the War Office and India.

The career of Henry Brackenbury illustrates the period of change that the army was undertaking. Had he been in the army a generation before he would have found it almost impossible to reach the heights he did. Had he been born a generation later he would have played a key role in the development of the army up to World War One. A generation later and his abilities might have been more greatly appreciated. Men of a similar style, such as Wilson, Grierson, Gleichen, Callwell and Robertson are an example of this. Also he would undoubtedly have been Chief of the General Staff. This was the ideal appointment for him. His championing of the creation of such a position was obviously, and naturally, partly motivated by a desire to fill such a post. However to say this was the sole reason for his campaigning would be to do him an injustice and would also ignore the fact that it was in the best interest of the army to have one. Britain was the last major power to create a General Staff, even though the

need had been visible for some time. It took the South African War to finally prove the necessity of such a body. It was indeed ironic that the office of Commander-in-Chief was abolished and a Chief of Staff created in its place only a matter of months after Brackenbury retired from the army.

There are two areas that have been touched upon during this thesis that warrant further study. Indeed two areas could, and to an extent have, merited a thesis in their own right. Firstly, Brackenbury's service for the National Aid Society, which to an extent is beyond the scope of a thesis concentrating on his military career, could provide an interesting study into this forerunner of the British Red Cross and the more general topic of the rise of humanitarianism in the late nineteenth century. Such a study would complement the work done by Bertrand Taithe that has looked predominantly at this through the continental experience. Secondly, a much wider study of the War Office's struggle to deal with the demands of the South African War, in particular within the Ordnance Department, would make a useful addition to the historiography of the period. It is some years since Andrew Page wrote his thesis on, 'The Supply services of the British Army in the South African War' and in that time historical views on the South African War have altered.

In 1904 Brackenbury retired from the army at the age of sixty-six. By this stage the years of hard work and the strain of the South African War had taken their toll on him. Indeed the breakdown of health he had suffered in recent years with the strain of war meant that had he not retired in 1904 it is likely he would have died soon. On retirement he moved to Nice, France. As it was, despite ill health, he lived for another ten years and died on 20th April 1914 at the age of seventy-six. The Times recorded that:

By the death of General Right Hon. Sir Henry Brackenbury, P.C., G.C.B., K.C.B., K.C.S.I., formerly Director-General of Ordnance and Colonel Commandant of the Regiment of Royal Artillery, which occurred in Nice yesterday, the Army loses the services of one of the most able of its officers of senior rank.¹¹

Indeed it was right that he should be called one of the ablest officers of senior rank, and it illustrated now far he had come. The Intelligence Branch had taken his profile to another level. His time in India was such a success that his name was being mentioned, although not by him, as a possible Commander-in-Chief in India. He had received high praise for his role in the South African War. Much of what he had campaigned for in military reform had been vindicated by the South African War. There was now a mandate to carry out such reform.

His achievements were recognised at the time, but years of neglect by historians mean that his role has largely been forgotten. Indeed he had been relegated to just one of the 'Wolseley ring'. This thesis has illustrated that he was far more than that and should be recognised as such. His importance to the army and the state was above his connection with Wolseley. Brackenbury was a man who became important in his own right, and had a career that stands out on its own merit. Had he become Chief of Staff it is certain that he would be extremely well known to historians. He might even have been an English Von Moltke or Von Schlieffen. However we shall never know. His administrative skills would have been put to great use had he been Chief of Staff in the years leading up to the South African War and World War One.

More than anything else Brackenbury's career illustrated that it was possible for a man of high intellect, learning and limited financial means to achieve high office in the late Victorian British army. To say he was a trailblazer is perhaps a slight exaggeration but the vital role in encourage young officers of a similar leaning, and

proving that they could reach the heights of the army should not be underestimated. Many of those young officers who served under him praised his example. It is disappointing that neither Ardagh or Grierson wrote autobiographies as the two men were closer to Brackenbury than any other office, and could in a way be called his protégés. Their insights into Brackenbury would have been another interesting source to examine.

On mere length of service alone, some forty-eight years, Henry Brackenbury's career is worthy of note and despite the many problems with undertaking such a study, it is still slightly surprising that no work about his military career and life has, until now, been written. This is especially so when one considers the many, and varied, areas in which he served and the significant events for both the army and the state in which he was closely involved. That Brackenbury held such a career, given his modest private means and the fact that he supplemented his pay through considerable literary work, again makes his life all the more interesting and significant. This, added to his ability to write, and to write well, his zeal for his work, both literary and military and the careful study of his profession make it no surprise that he was in many ways 'The Thinking Man's Soldier'

Notes

¹ Brackenbury, Henry *A Letter about the Family of Brackenbury* (London: Blackwood's, 1899).

² Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time* (London: Blackwood's 1909), pp.57-58.

³ Brackenbury to Wolseley 4th February 1883, Wolseley Papers, Hove Central Library.

⁴ Brackenbury to Wolseley 13th August 1885, Wolseley Papers, Hove Central Library.

⁵ Brackenbury to Stanhope 3rd November 1890 & 6th November 1890, Stanhope Papers, Centre for Kentish Studies.

⁶ Report of the War Office Reconstitution Committee (Esher Committee) Part I (London: H.M.S.O, 1904), p.161.

⁷ This is a continuing theme throughout Brian Bond's work but in particular in 'The Late Victorian Army', *History Today* 11:9 (Sept 1961). Harries-Jenkins, Gwyn *The Army in Victorian Society* (Trowbridge: Kegan Paul Ltd, 1977), again this is a constant theme, but in particular chapter 5. Spiers, Edward *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1903* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) chapter 4.

⁸ Wolseley, Field Marshal Viscount *The Story of a Soldier's Life* Volume 2 (London: Constable & Co, 1903), p.281.

⁹ *Report of the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa* (Elgin Commission) (London: H.M.S.O, 1903), p.29.

¹⁰ Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time*, p.354.

¹¹ *The Times*, 21st April 1914.

Appendix 1

Timeline of the Career of General Sir Henry Brackenbury*

- 1837 - Born on 1st September at Bolingbroke Hall, Lincolnshire. Fourth son of William and Maria Brackenbury.
- 1838 - Family move to Usselby Hall, Lincolnshire.
- 1842 - Henry's father is left paralysed by a stroke.
- 1843 - Family move to Ahascreagh, Ireland.
- 1844 - William Brackenbury dies.
- 1846-1849 - Henry attends Tonbridge School.
- 1850-1852 - Attends Eton.
- 1852-1854 - Training in under Her Majesty's Notary in Quebec, Mr Archibald Campbell.
- 1853 - Commission as Ensign in the Seventh battalion of the Quebec Militia.
- 1854 - Sits exam for Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. Passes with fifth highest score.
- 1854 - Joins as gentleman cadet and is appointed senior under officer.
- 1856 - Commission Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery. Appointed to garrison artillery I in Plymouth.
- 1857 - Sails for India in August as part of force to suppress the Indian Mutiny.
- 1858 - Sees first action at Battle of Banda. Invalided home later that year.
- 1860 - Appointed Adjutant of Royal Artillery in the western district.
- 1861 - Married Emila Morley (died 1905).
- 1862 - Appointed Lieutenant of Company of gentleman cadets at Royal Military Academy Woolwich.
- 1864 - Appointed Assistant Instructor in Artillery at Royal Military Academy, Woolwich.
- 1866 - Promoted to Captain in August.
- 1868 - Appointed Professor of Military History at Royal military Academy, Woolwich.

1869 - Promoted to Major in April.

1870- 1871 - Service for the National Aid Society during Franco-Prussian War.

1873-1874 - Served in Ashanti Campaign as Military Secretary to Wolseley.

1874 - Garrison Artillery at Sheerness.

1875 - Went to Natal serving as Military Secretary to Wolseley as Governor and High Commissioner.

1875 - Returns to England. Promoted to brevet Lieutenant Colonel and placed in command of depot at Woolwich.

1877 - Given command of garrison battery at Dover.

1878 - In May 1878 moved with his battery to Newhaven.

1878 - In July goes to Cyprus with Wolseley. Brackenbury appointed Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster of force. In August appointed Chief Commandant of Police and inspector of Prisons.

1879 - Appointed Military Secretary to Wolseley as the latter travels to take command in Zulu War. In September as Chief of Staff plans campaign against Chief Sekukuni. Made a Brevet Colonel.

1880 - Appointed Private Secretary to Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton. Continued in this appointment until August of that year.

1881 - Appointed Military Attaché in Paris.

1882 - Arrives in Ireland to take over command of Police, with exact title still unknown. Later given position of Assistant Under Secretary for Police and Crime. Position ends badly and is placed on half-pay, and returned to regiment with rank of Major.

1883 - Appointed to command of garrison artillery in Gibraltar.

1884-1885 - Serves in Gordon Relief Expedition, eventually commanding the River Column. Acting Brigadier-General.

1885 - Returns from Sudan and promoted to Major General.

1886-1891 - Director of Military Intelligence at the War Office. Promote Lieutenant General in April 1888.

1891-1896 - Military Member of the Council of the Viceroy of India.

1896-1899 - President of the Ordnance Board.

1899-1904 - Director General of the Ordnance. Acting General confirmed in 1902.

1904 - Retires from the army and is made a Privy Councillor.

1905 - Marriage to Edith Desanges and moves to Nice, France.

1914 - Dies in Nice, France.

*For dates of his literary work see appendix 2.

Appendix2

List of books and articles by Sir Henry Brackenbury

Any such list can never be complete. Largely this is due to the fact that many of the articles he wrote were anonymous due to their controversial nature and his position as an officer of the Crown. It is only where Brackenbury or someone else has claimed credit for him that they can be recorded. Hence some of these articles do not appear on list such as the Wellesley Index or P.C.I Full Text, but are claimed by Brackenbury in 'Some Memories of My Spare Time' or are confirmed by the private letters of the Blackwood's. Also it is unknown how much he contributed to 'The Times of Natal'. Brackenbury, Colley and Butler took it in turn to write the leading article for the paper. No record exists of which were contributed by him.

Books¹

The Last Campaign of Hanover (1870)

Les Marechaux de France, Etude de leur Conduite de la Guerre en 1870 (Paris: Lachaud Place du Theatre Francais, 1871).²

The Ashanti War: A Narrative prepared from the Official Documents 2 volumes (London: Blackwoods, 1874).

The River Column: A Narrative of the Advance of the River Column of The Nile Expeditionary Force (London: Blackwoods, 1885).

'Some Memories of my Spare Time' (1909) William Blackwood & Sons, London.

The Nearest Guard: The History of His Majesty's Body Guard of the Honourable Corps of Gentleman-at-Arms (London: , 1905).

Journal Articles

'Ancient Cannon in Europe' Part I 1865.

'Ancient Cannon in Europe' Part II 1866.³

'Operations against Charleston' *Fraser's Magazine* Volume 74 (July 1866).

'Military Reform' Part I to IV *Fraser's Magazine* Volume 74-75, (December 1866 to June 1867).

'Warfare in the Middle Ages' *The Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1866.

'The Military Armaments of the Five Great Powers' *Saint Paul's: A Monthly Magazine*, Volume I (November 1867).

'Our Army as it is, and as it should be' *Saint Paul's: A Monthly Magazine*, Volume I (February 1868).

'Parliament and Army Reform' *Saint Paul's: A Monthly Magazine*, Volume II (July

1868).

‘Army Reform’ *The Athenaeum*, (August 1868).⁴

‘Army Reform’ *The Athenaeum*, (February 1869).

‘The Influence of Modern Improvements Upon Strategy’ *Saint Paul’s: A Monthly Magazine*, Volume III (March 1869).

‘Military Education’ *St Paul’s; A Monthly Magazine*, (February 1870).⁵

‘The Tactics of the Three Arms as modified to meet the requirements of the Present Day’ *Royal United Service Institute Journal*, (1873).

‘Fanti and Ashanti: Three papers read on board the S.S Ambriz on the voyage to the Gold Coast’ (London: Blackwood & Sons, (1873).

‘Philanthropy in War’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 119 (February 1877).

‘Crete’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 121 (April 1877).

‘The South African Question’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 124 (July 1878).

‘The Troubles of a Scots Traveller’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 124 (October 1878).

‘Shadwell’s Life of Lord Clyde’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 129 (April 1881).

‘Midsummer in the Soudan’ *Fortnightly Review* Volume 44, (August 1885).

‘Life Insurance for Officers of the Army’ *United Service Journal*, (October 1891).

‘Stonewall Jackson’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 164 (December 1898).

‘A Letter about the Family of Brackenbury to William Blackwood Esq.’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* (2nd January 1899).

‘A Letter from Salamanca’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 165 (March 1899).

‘Sir George Pomeroy-Colley: Some Personal Recollections’ *Blackwood’s Magazine*, (March 1899).

‘The Transvaal Twenty Years Ago’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 166 (November 1899).

‘Lord Wantage, V.C, K.C.B’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 183 (February 1908).

‘The Ashanti Campaign’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 185 (March 1909).

‘Lord Lytton’s Indian Administration’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 166

(December 1899).

‘Military Attaché in Paris’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 185 (April 1909).

‘Prince Napoleon’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 185 (April 1909).

‘Sir John Ardagh’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 185 (May 1909).

‘James Douglas, M.D. Surgeon Venturer’ *Blackwood’s Magazine* Volume 191 (January 1912).

‘Sir Frederick Richards and Sir Garnet Wolseley’ *The National Review*, (September 1913).

Newspaper Articles

He wrote far more for the daily press than is known. Much was either deliberately anonymous or credit was not given.

Leading article on Corporal Punishment in the army *The Standard* 18th March 1867. A second article on the same subject was published in *The Standard’s* sister paper *The Morning Herald* on 30th March 1867.

‘Help for the Sick and Wounded’ *The Standard* (January 1868). Two articles.

‘A Tour in the Cockpit of Europe’ *The Standard* (14th September 1868).

‘The Kermesse in Belgium’ *The Standard* (23rd September 1868).⁶

‘The Armies of France, Prussia and Spain’ *The Standard* (12th July 1870).

‘French and Prussian Tactics’ *The Standard* (14th July 1870).

‘Diary of the War’ *The Standard* (6th August 1870). This continued every day until 1st September 1870, when he left to start his work for the National Aid Society.

‘The Paris Commune’ *The Times* (17th April 1871).

‘Russia at Constantinople’ *The Daily Telegraph* (18th November 1876).

‘Diplomatic Parallels’ *The Daily Telegraph* (20th November 1876).

‘England’s Greatest Danger in the East’ *The Daily Telegraph*. Two articles on 18th and 20th February 1877.^{7*}

‘Five French Plays and a Moral’ *The World* 14th March 1877.

‘England’s Threatened Interests’ *The Daily Telegraph* April 1877. *

‘Why do we hesitate?’ *The Daily Telegraph* April 1877. *

‘The Russian Advance Through Roumania’ *The Daily Telegraph* April 1877. *

‘The Passage of the Danube’ *The Daily Telegraph* May 1877. *

‘The Lines of Gallipoli’ *The Daily Telegraph* June 1877. *

Miscellaneous

Brande’s Dictionary of Literature, Science, and Art (London: Messrs Longmans, Green & Co, 1866). Brackenbury contributed the military articles for this edition.

Smith, Major-General Michael. W. *Drill and Manoeuvres of Cavalry combined with Horse Artillery* (London: Longman’s, 1865). At the request of Mr Longman Brackenbury edited the book.

¹ Some people regard ‘The Tactics of the Three Arms’ as a book, as Mitchells of London first published it as a pamphlet in 1873. It was originally a lecture to the Royal United Service Institute, and subsequently published in their Journal. If one is to count this as a book it would be necessary to count a letter from Salamanca in the same vein, as this was published in the way format by Blackwoods at a later date. It has been decided here to count neither as a book and include them as Journal articles for the sake of clarity and simplicity.

² This is the book that Brackenbury had suppressed before publication for fear that it might prejudice the trial of Marshal Bazaine. Only five copies survived, one with the Emperor Napoleon III, one with Marshal Canrobert, one with Sir Lintorn Simmons, one with the Staff College Library and one to the French Journal ‘Republique Francaise’.

³ It has already been mentioned that this was meant to be a series of three articles, but his archival research was lost in a fire, and he had neither the time nor inclination to start again. The Original handwritten copies of the first two articles survive in the archives of the Royal Artillery Museum at Woolwich.

⁴ The two articles on Army Reform, whilst linked, are not entitled part I & II, so they have been listed individually.

⁵ In *Some memories of My Spare Time* Brackenbury claims to have written this article anonymously

⁶ There articles were written during one of his vacation tours of the continents battlefields which he undertook whilst Professor of Military History at Woolwich. He undertook a similar tour in 1869, but no record of the articles he wrote exists.

⁷ These articles were written under the signature of ‘Anglophile’. Any articles marked * are written under that pseudonym. Their nature was highly politicised. Reading between the lines it can be suggested that they might have been written with the collusion of Lord Hartington. See Brackenbury, Henry *Some Memories of My Spare Time* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909), pp.247-248.

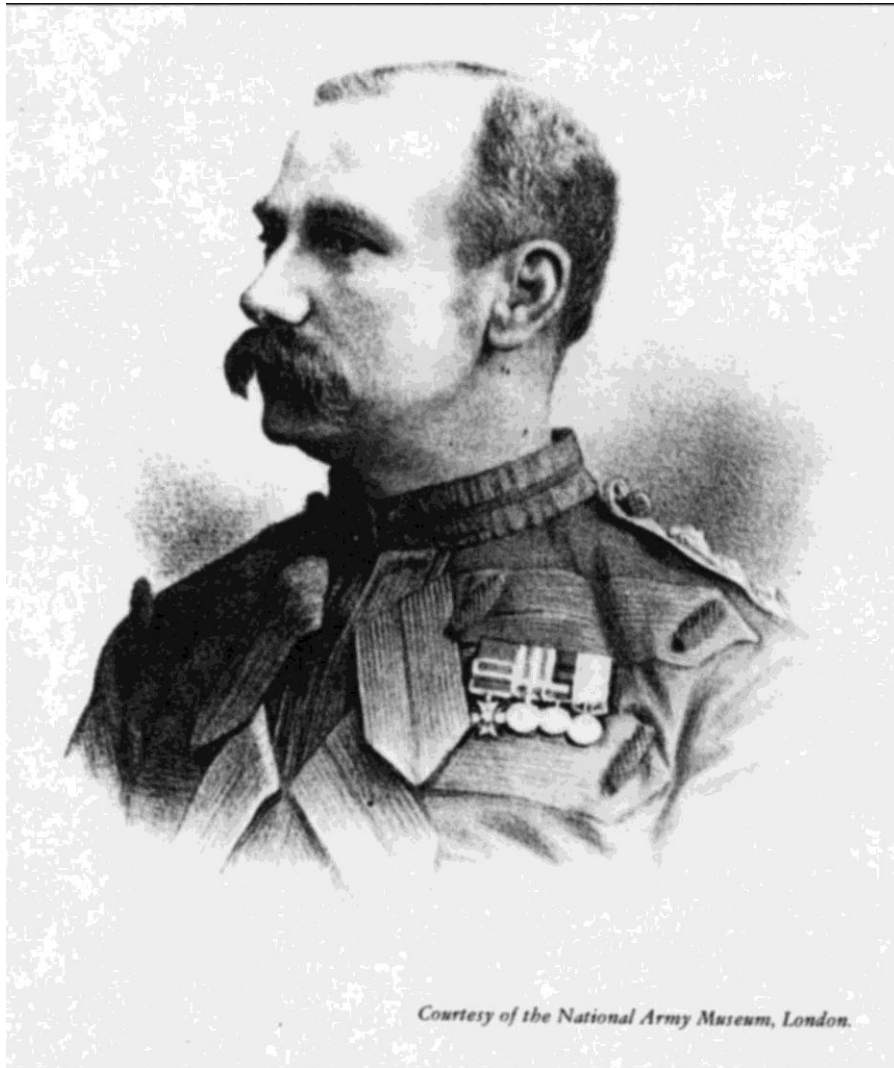
Appendix 3

Pictures of Sir Henry Brackenbury

1. circa 1870. Brackenbury in his early thirties.

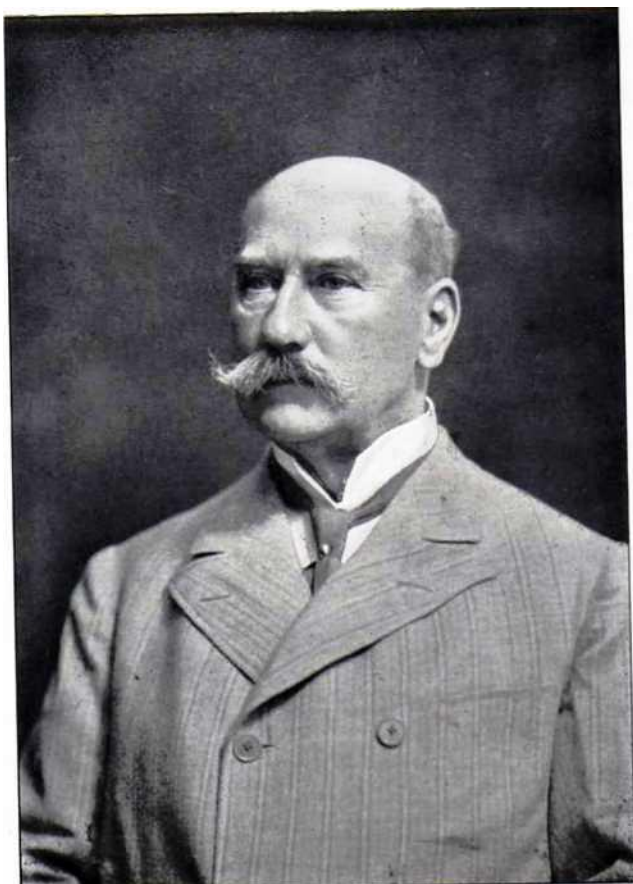


2. The exact date is unclear, but it was taken during his tenure as Head of the Intelligence Branch.





3. Brackenbury on his appointment to the Privy Council in 1904.



4. Brackenbury in retirement.

Bibliography¹

Primary sources

Archives

British Library

Arnold-Forster Papers Add50300, Add50336

Balfour Papers Add49683, Add49722

Campbell-Bannerman Papers Add41233, Add41238

Chief of Staff's Journal of the military operations in the Transvaal, 1879. By Lt Colonel H. Brackenbury (1880, London).

T.H. Escott Papers Add58775

Gladstone Papers Add44308

E.T.H Hutton Papers Add50078

Report by Director General of Ordnance on Armaments and material of War Add50325

Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Reserves of guns, stores for the Army (Mowatt Committee) 1900 Add50306

Spencer Papers Add77088

British Library, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collection

Brackenbury Official Papers, Mss.Eur.D.735.

Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone.

Stanhope Papers

Devon Records Office, Exeter

Buller Papers

Hove Central Library

Wolseley Papers

Military Intelligence Museum, Chicksands

Intelligence Archives

National Archives, Kew

HO73/35/3 Minutes of Evidence of Hartington Commission

HO73/36/4 Report of the Hartington Commission

PRO30/40/2 Ardagh Papers

WO32/6136 Lord Wolseley's Sudan Campaign Dispatches

WO32/6349 Memorandum by Brackenbury & Newmarch

WO32/6352 Brackenbury correspondence with Buller

WO32/7026 Committee of Enquiry

WO32/7860 Reports of Director General of Ordnance

WO33/46 Intelligence and Mobilisation Reports

WO33/50 Brackenbury to British Ambassador in Berlin

WO106/16 Chapman Papers

WO106/6157 Secret Military Despatch No180

WO108/66 Secretary of State for War Papers

WO108/79 Proceedings of the Army Board
WO108/336 Ordnance and Ammunition from Germany
WO147/3 & WO147/4 Wolseley Ashanti Campaign Journal
WO147/5 Wolseley Journal whilst in Natal
WO147/6 Wolseley Cyprus Journal
WO147/7 Wolseley Zulu War Journal
WO147/8 Wolseley Sudan Campaign Journal

National Army Museum, Chelsea
Roberts Papers R11/42

National Library of Scotland
Blackwood Papers

Royal Artillery Museum Woolwich
Brackenbury Letter Books

British Public Documents

Reports from the Select Committee on Army and Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, and minutes of evidence. (1887)

Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the system under which patterns of warlike stores are adopted and the stores obtained and passed for Her Majesty's service (Stephen Commission) (Cd.5062 , 1887)

Minutes of evidence taken before the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the system under which patterns of warlike stores are adopted and the stores obtained and passed for Her Majesty's service (Stephen Commission) (Cd.5062-1, 1887)

Report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the organisation and administration of the Manufacturing Departments of the Army; with minutes of evidence, appendix and index (Morley Committee) (Cd.5116, 1887)

Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the civil establishments of the different offices of state at home and abroad, with minutes of evidence, appendix (Ridley Commission) (Cd. 5226, 1887)

Memorandum of the Secretary of State relating to the Army Estimates 1887-8 (Cd. 4985, 1887)

Final report from the Select Committee on Army Estimates; with the proceedings of the committee, 17th July 1888.

Royal Commission appointed to enquire into the civil and professional administration of the naval and military departments and the relation of those departments to each other and to the treasury (Hartington Commission) (Cd. 5979, 1890)

Memorandum showing the duties of the principal officers and departments of the War Office and details of office procedure, under the Order in Council dated 21st November 1895 (Cd. 7987, 1896)

Memorandum showing the duties of the principal officers and departments of the War Office and details of office procedure, under the Order in Council dated 7th March 1899 (Cd. 9230, 1899).

Report of the Committee appointed to enquire into War Office organisation (Clinton Dawkins Committee) (Cd. 580-1, 1901)

Report of His Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the military preparations and other matters connected with the war in South Africa (Elgin Commission) (Cd. 1789, 1903)

Minutes of evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the war in South Africa (Elgin Commission) Part I (Cd. 1790, 1903) Part II (Cd. 1791, 1903)

Report of the War Office Reconstitution Committee (Esher Committee) Part I (Cd. 1932, 1904) Part II (Cd. 1968, 1904) Part III (Cd. 2002, 1904)

Appendices to the minutes of evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the war in South Africa (Cd. 1792, 1904)

Newspapers and Periodicals

Blackwood's Magazine

Fortnightly Review

Fraser's Magazine

Review of Reviews

Saint Paul's: A Monthly Magazine

The Academy

The Athenaeum

The Daily Telegraph

The Illustrated London News

The Standard

The Times

The United Service Journal

Edited Diaries

Arthur, Sir George *The letters of Lord and Lady Wolseley 1870-1911* (London: William Heinemann, 1923).

Brett, M.V (ed) *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher* 4 Volumes (London: Ivor Nicolson, 1934-35).

Cavendish, Anne (ed) *Cyprus 1878: The Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley* (Nicosia: Cultural Centre of the Cyprus, 1991).

Laband, John *Lord Chelmsford's Zululand Campaign 1878-1879* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Press, 1994).

Preston, Anthony (ed) *The South African Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley* (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1971).

Roberts, Bryan (ed) *Roberts in India: The Military Papers of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts 1876-1893* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993).

Contemporary Books, Autobiographies and Journal Articles

Adye, Sir John *Recollections of a Military life* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1895).

— *Soldiers and others I have known* (London: H. Jenkins, 1919).

Amery, Leo. S *The Times History of the War in South Africa* (London: Sampson Low, 1900-09).

Arnold-Forster, H.O *The Army in 1906: A policy and a Vidication* (London: Duttton, 1906).

— *The War Office, the Army and the Empire* (London: Cassell & Co Ltd, 1900).

Arnold-Forster, Mary *The Rt Hon Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster: A Memoir* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910).

Aston, Major-General Sir George *His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn: A life and intimate study* (London: Harrap & Co Ltd, 1929).

— *Secret Service* (London: Faber & Faber, 1909).

Baden-Powell, Lieutenant-General Sir Robert *My Adventures as a Spy* (London: C.A. Pearson, 1915).

Balck, Major *The lessons of the Boer War and the Battle-working of the three arms* (Translated from original German and published in the Royal United Service Institutes Journal 48 Part 2 July/Dec 1904).

Barrow, General Sir George *The Fire of Life* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1941).

Battersby, H.F Prevost *In the Web of War* (London: Methuen & Co, 1900).

Beresford, Lord Charles *The Memoirs of Lord Charles Beresford* 2 Volumes (London:1914).

Bethell, Colonel H.A *Modern Guns and Gunnery: A Practical manual for the officers*

- of the Horse, Field and mountain Artillery* (Woolwich: Royal Artillery, 1910).
- Brackenbury, Henry Ashanti *War* Volume I & II (Edinburgh: Blackwoods, 1874).
- *Some Memories of My Spare Time* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1909).
- *The Last Campaign of Hanover* (London: W. Mitchell & Co, 1870).
- *The Nearest Guard: The History of His Majesty's Body Guard of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-arms* (London: Harrison & Sons, 1905).
- *The River Column* (London: Blackwoods, 1885).
- *The Tactics of the three arms as modified to meet the requirements of the present day* (London: Mitchell, 1873).
- Butler, Lewis *Sir Redvers Buller* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1909).
- Cairnes, William Elliot *An Absent Minded War: Being Some Reflections on our Reverses and the Causes which Led to Them* (London: J Milne, 1900).
- Callwell, Charles. E *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: H.M.S.O, 1896).
- *Stray Recollections* 2 Volumes (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1923).
- *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson* 2 Volumes (London: Cassell, 1927).
- Childers, Lieutenant-Colonel Spencer *The life and correspondence of the Rt Hon. C.E. Childers 1827-1896* 2 Volumes (London: John Murray, 1901).
- Conan-Doyle, Arthur *The Great Boer War* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1900).
- Director General of Ordnance (General Sir Henry Brackenbury) *Notes of Artillery Material and Experiments* (London: Ordnance Department, 1903).
- Dilke, Sir Charles & Spencer Wilkinson, H *Imperial Defence* (London: Constable, 1892).
- Dilke, Sir Charles *Army Reform* (London: Service & Paton, 1898).
- Du Cane, Colonel Herbert *The War in South Africa: Prepared in the Historical Section of the Great General Staff, Berlin* (London: John Murray, 1906).
- Durand, Sir Mortimer *The Life of Field Marshal Sir George White V.C* (London: William Blackwood, 1915).
- Escott, T.H.S 'Henry Brackenbury and his school' *Contemporary Reviews* 105 (January/June 1914).

— ‘Lord Wolseley and “Those about Him” Chapter in *Personal Forces of the Period* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1898).

Fleetwood-Wilson, Guy *Letters to Somebody* (London: Cassell & Co, 1922).

Furley, John *Struggles and Experiences of a Neutral Volunteer* Volume I&II (London: Chapman, 1872)

— *In Peace and War: Autobiographical sketches* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1909).

Gleichen, Lord *A Guardsman's Memories* (London: Blackwoods, 1921).

— *With the Camel Corps up the Nile* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1888).

Grierson, Lieutenant-Colonel James Moncrieff *Scarlet into Khaki* (London: Sampson, Low, 1899).

Gudgin, Peter *Military Intelligence: A History* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1999).

Haldane, Richard Burdon *An Autobiography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929).

Hamilton, Captain Ian. S. M. *Listening for the Drums* (London: Faber & Faber, 1944).

— *The fighting of the future* (London: Kegan Paul, 1885).

Hamley, General E. B *Operations of War* (London: Blackwoods, 1872).

Hicks-Beach, Lady Victoria *The Life of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Earl of Aldwyn* 2 Volumes (London: Macmillan & Co, 1932).

Knollys, H ‘Awake! Lord Hartington!’ *Colburn's United Service Magazine* (July/December 1884).

Malmesbury, Susan Countess of *The Life of Major-General Sir John Ardagh* (London: John Murray, 1909).

Maurice, Major- General Sir Frederick and Grant, M. H *History of the War in South Africa* 4 Volumes (London: Hurst and Blackett Ltd, 1906-10).

May, Lieutenant-Colonel E.S *A Retrospect on the South African War* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co, 1901).

Menpes, Mortimer *War Impressions* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1903).

Owen, Lieutenant-Colonel C. H ‘Modern Artillery as Exhibited at Paris in 1867’ *Royal United Service Institute Journal* 12 (1869).

— *Principles and Practice of Modern Artillery* (London: John Murray, 1871).

- ‘The Employment of Artillery in South Africa’ *United Service Magazine* (April/September 1900).
- Pollock, Major A.W.A *With Seven Generals in the Boer War* (London: Skeffington & Sons, 1909).
- Repington, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles A’Court *Vestigia* (London: Constable and Co Ltd, 1919).
- Roberts, Field Marshal Lord *Forty-one years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief* 2 Volumes (London: Macmillan, 1902).
- Robertson, Field-Marshal Sir W *From Private to Field-Marshal* (London: Constable and Co Ltd, 1921).
- Smith-Dorrien, General Sir Horace *Memories of Forty-Eight Years Service* (London: John Murray, 1925).
- St John Broderick Earl of Middleton, William *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939* (London: John Murray, 1939).
- Stead, W.T *How Britain goes to War* (London: Review of Reviews, 1903).
- *The War in South Africa: Methods of Barbarism* (London: 1901).
- ‘What is the Truth about the Navy?’ *Pall Mall Gazette*, (15th September 1884).
- Walters, Colonel W. H. H *Private and Personal* (London: John Murray, 1928).
- *Secret and Confidential* (London: John Murray, 1926).
- *The War in South Africa* (London: John Murray, 1904).
- Wilson, H. W *With the Flag to Pretoria* 4 Volumes (London: Harmsworth Brothers Ltd, 1900).
- *After Pretoria: The Guerrilla Campaign* 2 Volumes (London: Amalgamated Press, 1902).
- Wilkinson, Spencer *Lessons of the War* (London: Constable & Co, 1900).
- *The Brain of an Army: A popular Account of the German General Staff* (London: Constable & Co, 1890).
- *The Brain of the Navy* (London; Constable & Co, 1895).
- Wolseley, Field Marshal Viscount *The Story of a Soldier’s Life* (London: Constable & Co, 1903).

Wood, Field Marshal Sir Henry Evelyn *Midshipman to Field Marshal* 2 Volumes (London: Methuen Press, 1906).

Secondary sources

Books

Arthur, Sir G *Life of Lord Kitchener* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1920).

Andrew, C. M *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (London: Heinemann, 1985).

Ascoli, David A *Companion to the British Army 1660-1983* (London: Harrap Ltd, 1983).

Asher, Michael 'Khartoum: The Ultimate Imperial Adventure' (London: Viking Books, 2005).

Altholz, J. L *Victorian England 1873-1901* (2002) Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Badsey, Stephen *The Franco-Prussian War 1870-1871* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003).

Baker, A *The Battles and Battlefields of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (Milton Keynes: Military Press, 1999).

Barnett, Correlli *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970* (London: Cassell & Co, 1970).

Barthorp, Michael 'Queen Victoria's Commanders' (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2000).

Bastable, Marshal. J. *Arms and the State: Sir William Armstrong and the remaking of British Naval Power 1854-1914* (London: Ashgate, 2004).

Beckett, Ian and Gooch, John (Ed) *Politics and Defence studies in the formation of British Defence policy 1845-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981).

Beckett, Ian *The Victorians at War* (London: Hambledon Press, 2003).

— *Victoria's Wars* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 1998)

Belfield, Eversley 'The Boer War' (London: Leo Cooper, 1975).

Best, Geoffrey *Humanity in Warfare; The Modern History of the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980).

- Best, G & Wheatcroft, A (eds) *War Economy and the Military Mind* (London: Croom Helm, 1976).
- Bidwell, Shelford *The Royal Horse Artillery* (London: Leo Cooper, 1973).
- Biddulph, Sir Robert *Lord Cardwell at the War Office* (London: John Murray, 1904).
- Blake, R *The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970).
- Bond, Brian *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972).
- *Victorian Military Campaigns* (London: Hutchinson, 1967).
- *War and Society in Europe, 1870-1970* (London: Fontana Press, 1984).
- Bonham-Carter, Victor *Soldier True: The Life and Times of Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, 1860-1933* (London: Muller, 1963).
- Brackenbury, Charles E *The Brackenbury's of Lincolnshire* (London: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1983).
- Brereton, J.M *The British Soldier: A Social History from 1661 to the present day* (London: The Bodley Head, 1983).
- Brigland, Tony *Field Gun Jack Versus the Boers: The Royal Navy in South Africa 1899-1900* (London: Leo Cooper, 1998).
- Brown, L *Victorian News and Newspapers* (London: Clarendon Press, 1985).
- Brookes, Kenneth *Battle Thunder: The Story of Britain's Artillery* (Reading: Osprey, 1973).
- Bywater, Hector & Ferraby, H.C *Strange Intelligence: Memoir of Naval Secret Service* (London: Constable & Co, 1931).
- Carver, Field Marshal Lord *The Seven Ages of the British Army* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984).
- *Britain's Army in the 20th Century* (London: Pan Books, 1999).
- *The National Army Museum Book of The Boer War* (London: Pan Books, 2000).
- Chandler, David *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- Charteris, Brigadier-General John *Field Marshal Earl Haig* (London: Cassell & Co Ltd, 1929).

- Clayton, Anthony *Forearmed: A History of the Intelligence Corps* (London: Bassey's, 1993).
- Coetzer, Owen *The Anglo-Boer War: The Road to Infamy 1899-1900* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1996).
- Cooter, Roger & Harrison, Mark & Sturdy Steve *War, Medicine and Modernity* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998).
- Corfe, T.H *The Phoenix Park Murders: Conflict, Compromise and Tragedy in Ireland 1879-1882* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968).
- Davey, A *The British Pro-Boers* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1978).
- Deacon, Richard A *History of the British Secret Service* (London: Frederick Muller, 1969).
- Denis, Peter & Grey, Jeffrey (eds) *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire* (Canberra: Army Historical Unit, 2000).
- Duckers, Peter *The British-Indian Army 1860-1914* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications Ltd, 2003).
- Dunlop, Colonel John K *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914* (London: Methuen Press, 1938).
- Ehrman, John *Cabinet Government and War 1890-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).
- Eldridge, C.C *Disraeli and the rise of a new Imperialism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).
- Elletson, D.H *The Chamberlains* (London: John Murray, 1966).
- Ensor, Sir Robert *England 1870-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).
- Farwell, Byron *Armies of the Raj: From the Great Indian Mutiny to Independence, 1858-1947* (London: W.W Norton & Co, 1989).
- *Eminent Victorian Soldiers* (London: W.W Norton, 1985).
- *For Queen and Country* (London: Allen Lane, 1981).
- *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 1973).
- *The Great Boer War* (Ware: Allen Lane, Wordsworth Editions, 1999).
- Featherstone, Donald *Weapons and Equipment of the Victorian Soldier* (Poole: Blandford Press, 1978).

Fergusson, Thomas G *British Military Intelligence, 1870-1914: The Development of a Modern Intelligence Organisation* (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, Inc, 1984).

Fisher, John *Gentleman Spies: Intelligence agents in the British Empire and beyond* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2002).

Forbes, General Archibald A *History of the Army Ordnance Service Volume I&II* (London: The Medici Society Ltd, 1929).

Foreman-Peck, James (Editor) *New Perspectives on the Late Victorian Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Forester, C.S *The General* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex Penguin Books, 1975).

Fortescue, Sir John A *History of the British Army* 13 Volumes (London: Macmillan Press, 1902 to 1930).

—*Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923).

— *The Empire and the Army* (London: Cassell, 1928).

—*The Royal Army Service Corps: A history of transport and supply in the British Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930).

Frankland, Noble *Witnesss of a Century: The Life and Times of prince Arthur Duke of Connaught 1850-1942* (London: Shepherd-Walwyn, 1993).

Fraser, Peter *Lord Esher: A Political Biography* (London: Hart-Davis, 1973).

French, David *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People c1870-2000* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).

French, Hon Gerald *Lord Chelmsford and the Zulu War* (London: Unwin Brothers Ltd, 1939).

Gibbs, Norman. H. *The Origins of Imperial Defence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955).

Gilmour, David *The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling* (London: John Murray, 2002).

Glover, Michael *Rorke's Drift* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1997).

Godwin-Austin, Major A.R *The Staff and the Staff College* (London: Constable and Company, 1927).

Gooch, John (ed) *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

- *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).
- *The Prospect of War: Studies in British Defence Policy 1847-1942* (London: Frank Cass, 1981).
- Goodwin, John. E. *Fortification of the South Coast: The Pevensey, Eastbourne and Newhaven Defence 1750-1945* (Worthing: JJ Publications, 1994).
- Gordon, Hampden *The War Office: Past and Present* (London: Methuen, 1914).
- Graves, Charles *Mr Punch's History of Modern England 1841-1914* (London: Cassell & Co, 1921).
- Grigg, John *The young Lloyd George* (London: Methuen Press, 1973).
- Gourvish, T.R 'The Rise of the Professions' in Gourish, T.R & O'Day, A (eds) *Later Victorian Britain 1867-1900* (Basingstoke: 1988).
- Guy, Alan & Harding, Marion (eds) *Ashes Blood: The British Army in South Africa 1795-1914* (London: National Army Museum, 1999).
- Hamer, W.S *The British Army: Civil-Military Relations 1885-1905* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).
- Hannah, W.H *Bobs, Kipling's General: The life of Field-Marshal Earl Roberts of Kandahar* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972).
- Harries-Jenkins, Gwyn *The Army in Victorian Society* (Trowbridge: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1977).
- Hastings, Max *The Oxford Book of Military Anecdotes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- Haswell, Jock *British Military Intelligence* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973).
- Haythornthwaite, Phillip J *The Colonial Wars Source Book* (London: Caxton Publishing Group, 2000).
- Headlam, Major-General Sir John *The History of the Royal Artillery Volume II* (Woolwich: Royal Artillery Institution, 1937).
- *Six Centuries of Royal Artillery History* (Woolwich: Royal Artillery Institution, 1944).
- Heathcote, T.A *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India 1822-1922* (David & Charles: Newton Abbot, 1974).
- *The Military in British India: The Development of British land forces in South Asia 1600-1947* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

- Howard, Michael *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France 1870-1871* (London: Methuen Press, 1981).
- Holmes, Richard *Sahib: The British Soldier in India* (London: Harper Collins, 2005).
- Hopkirk, Peter *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
- Hutchinson, John *Champions of charity: War and the rise of the Red Cross* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996).
- Jackson, Patrick *The Last of the Whigs: A Political Biography of Lord Hartington* (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1994).
- Jackson, Tabitha *The Boer War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2001).
- James, D *The Life of Lord Roberts* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1954).
- James, Lawrence *Raj: The making and unmaking of British India* (London: Abacus Books, 1997).
- *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Abacus Books, 1995).
- Jeal, Tim *Baden-Powell* (London: Pimlico Press, 1995).
- Jerrold, Walter *Earl Kitchener of Khartoum: The Story of his Life* (London: W.A Hammond, 1915).
- Johnson, F. *A Defence by Committee* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).
- Judd, Denis & Surridge, Keith *The Boer War* (London: John Murray, 2002).
- Judd, Denis *Empire: The British Experience from 1765 to the present* (London: Harper Collins, 1996).
- *Radical Joe: A life of Joseph Chamberlain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993).
- *Someone has Blundered: Calamities of the British Army in the Victorian Age* (Moreton-in-the-Marsh: Arthur Baker Ltd, 1999).
- Johnson, F.A *Defence by Committee* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).
- Kennedy, Paul M *The War Plans of the Great Powers 1880-1914* (Winchester, Massachusetts: Allen & Unwin Inc, 1985).
- Kennedy, P.M *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Macmillan, 1983).

- *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980).
- Keown-Boyd, Henry *A Good Dusting: The Sudan Campaigns 1883-1899* (London: Guild Publishing, 1986).
- Kochanski, Halik *Sir Garnet Wolseley: Victorian Hero* (London: Hambeldon Press, 1999).
- Knight, Ian *Brave Men's Blood* (London: Greenhill, 1990).
- *Colenso 1899: The Boer War in Natal* (London: Osprey, 1995).
- *Go to your God like a soldier* (London: Greenhill, 1996).
- *Great Zulu Battles 1838-1906* (London: Cassell & Co, 1998).
- *The National Army Museum Book of the Zulu War* (London: Pan Books, 2004).
- Kruger, Rayne *Goodbye Dolly Gray: A History of the Boer War* (London: Pan Books, 1974).
- Laband, John & Thompson, Paul *The Illustrated Guide to the Anglo-Zulu War* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000).
- Laband, John *The Anglo-Zulu War: The War Correspondents* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1996).
- *Lord Chelmsford's Zululand Campaign 1878-1879* (Stroud: Alan Sutton for Army Records Society, 1994).
- Laffin, John *Tommy Atkins: The Story of the English Soldier* (London: Cassell, 1966).
- Lee, John *A Soldier's Life: General Sir Ian Hamilton 1853-1947* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000).
- Le May, G. H *British Supremacy in South Africa 1899-1907* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).
- Lehmann, Joseph H *All Sir Garnet: A Life of Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley* (London: Jonathan Lane, 1964).
- *The First Boer War* (London: Buchan and Enright, 1972)
- Lloyd, A *The Drums of Kumasi: The Story of the Ashanti Wars* (London: Longmans, 1964).
- Loades, Judith (Editor) *The Life and Times of David Lloyd George* (Bangor: Headstart History, 1991).

- Longford, Elizabeth *Jameson's Raid: The Prelude to the Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982).
- Lowry, Donal (ed) *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
- Luvaas, Jay *The Education of an Army: British Military Thought 1815-1940* (London: Cassell, 1964).
- MacDiarmid, D.S *The Life of Lieutenant General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson* (London: Constable & Company Ltd, 1923).
- MacKenzie, J.M (ed) *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).
- *Propaganda and Empire: The manipulation of British public opinion 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).
- Magnus, Phillip *Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist* (London: Butler & Tanner, 1958).
- Makepeace-Warne, Anthony *Brassey's Companion to the British Army* (London: Brassey's, 1998).
- Marsh, P.T *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).
- Mason, P.A *Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, its officers and men* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974).
- Maurice, Major-General Sir Frederick *The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent* (London: Cassell & Co Ltd, 1928).
- Maurice, Sir Frederick and Arthur Sir George *The Life of Lord Wolseley* (London: William Heinemann, 1924).
- Maxwell, Leigh *The Ashanti Ring: Sir Garnet Wolseley's Campaigns 1870-1882* (London: Leo Cooper, 1985).
- Melville, Charles Henderson *Life of General the Right Hon. Sir Redvers Buller* 2 Volumes (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1923).
- Messenger, Charles *History of the British Army* (London: Bison Books Ltd, 1986).
- Miller, Stephen M *Lord Methuen and the British Army* (London: Frank Cass, 1999).
- Millman, R *Britain and the Eastern Question 1875-1878* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

- Montgomery, Field-Marshal Viscount A *Concise History of Warfare* (London: William Collins, 1968).
- Morris, Donald R *The Washing of the Spears* (London: Sphere Books, 1976).
- Murray, Williamson (ed) *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
- Nasson, William. R *The South African War, 1899-1902* (London: Hodder& Arnold, 1999).
- Newton, Lord *Lord Lansdowne: A Biography* (London: Macmillan Press, 1929).
- Newton, Scott & Porter, Dilwyn *Joseph Chamberlain 1836-1914: A Bibliography* (London: Greenwood Press, 1994).
- Nicol, Fergus *The Mahdi of Sudan and the death of General Gordon* (Stroud: Sutton Press, 2005).
- Nutting, A *Gordon: Martyr and Misfit* (London: Constable, 1966).
- Omissi, D & Thompson, A.S (eds) *The Impact of the South African War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
- Owen, Frank *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd-George his life and times* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1954).
- Pakenham, Thomas *The Boer War* (London: Abacus Books, 1992).
- ‘The Scramble for Africa 1876-1912’ (London: Abacus Books, 1992).
- Parritt, Lieutenant-Colonel B.A.H *The Intelligencers: ‘The Story of British Military Intelligence up to 1914* (Ashford: The Intelligence Corps: 1971).
- Pearce, Malcolm & Stewart, Geoffrey *British Political History 1867-1990: Democracy and Decline* (London: Routledge, 1992).
- Peck, John *War, the Army and Victorian Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).
- Perkin, Harold James *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880* (London: Routledge, 1989).
- Perrett, Bryan *Last Stand: Famous Battles against the odds* (London: Cassell Military Paperbacks, 1991).
- Porter, A. N *The Origins of the South African War: Joseph Chamberlain and the Diplomacy of Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980).
- Porch, Douglas *Wars of Empire* (London: Cassell & Co, 2000).

- Powell, Geoffrey *Buller: A Scapegoat?* (London: Leo Cooper, 1994).
- Preston, Adrian *In Relief of Gordon* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1967).
- Pretorius, F *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (Cape Town: D Nelson, 1985).
- Price, Richard *An Imperial War and the British Working Class* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).
- Regan, Geoffrey *Military Blunders* (London: Carlton Publishing Group, 2001).
- Richards, D.S *The Savage Frontier: A History of the Anglo-Afghan Wars* (London: Pan Books, 2003).
- Roberts, Andrew *Lord Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London: Phoenix, 1999).
- Rogers, Colonel H.C.B *Artillery through the Ages* (London: Seeley Service & Co, 1971).
- *The Mounted Troops of the British Army 1066-1945* (London: Seeley Service & Co, 1959).
- *Weapons of the British Soldier* (London: Seeley Service and Co, 1960).
- Rose, Kenneth *Superior Person: A Portrait of Curzon and his circle in Late Victorian England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969).
- Rowland, Peter *David Lloyd George: A Biography* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1975).
- Samuels, Martin *Command or Control: Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies 1888-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1995).
- Selby, John *The Boer War* (London: Arthur Baker Ltd, 1969).
- Searle, G.R *A New England? Peace and war 1886-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- *Entrepreneurial Politics in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (London: Ashfield Press, 1990).
- Shannon, Richard *The Age of Salisbury, 1881-1902: Unionism and Empire* (Harlow: Longman Press, 1996).
- Sheffield, Gary (ed) *Leadership and Command: The Anglo-American Military Experience since 1861* (London: Brasseys, 1997).

Sheppard, Captain Eric William *A Short History of the British Army to 1914* (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1934).

Short, Kenneth R.M *The Dynamite War: Irish-American Bombers in Victorian Britain* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979).

Skelley, A.R *The Victorian Army at Home* (London: Croom Helm, 1977).

Skentelbery, Norman *Arrows to Atom Bombs* (London: Ordnance Board, 1975).

Smith, Iain. R *The Origins of the South African War 1899-1902* (Harlow: Longman, 1996).

Smith, Paul *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain 1856-1990* (London: Hambeldon Press, 1996).

Smyth, Brigadier The Rt. Hon Sir J *Sandhurst: The History of the Royal Military Academy Woolwich, The Royal Military College, Sandhurst and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst 1741-1961* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1961).

Snook, Mike *Into the Jaws of Death: Epic fights of the Victorian Army* (US Naval Institute, 2007).

Sommer, Dudley *Haldane of Cloan: His life and time* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960).

Spiers, Edward M *The Army and Society 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980).

— *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

— *The Victorian Soldier in Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

Stafford, David *Churchill & Secret Service* (London: John Murray, 1997).

Strachan, Hew *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Streets, Heather *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

- Stone, Jay & Schmidl, Erwin. A *The Boer War and Military Reform* (London: University Press of America, 1988).
- Strong, Maj-General Sir Kenneth *Men of Intelligence* (London: Cassell, 1960).
- Surridge, Keith *British Civil Military Relations and the South African War 1899-1902* (London: University of London, 1994).
- *Managing the South African War 1899-1902: Politicians Vs Generals* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society Publications, 1998).
- Symons, Julian *Buller's Campaign* (London: Cresset Press, 1963).
- *England's Pride: The Story of the Gordon Relief Expedition* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1965).
- Taithe, Bertrand *Citizenship and War: France in Turmoil 1870-1871* (London: Routledge, 2001).
- *Defeated Flesh: Welfare, Warfare and the making of Modern France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
- Terraine, John *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1963).
- Thompson, George C *Public Opinion and Lord Beaconsfield 1875-80 Volume II* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1886).
- Thompson, Brian *Imperial Vanities: The Adventures of the Baker brothers and Gordon of Khartoum* (London: Harper Collins, 2002).
- Trebilcock, C 'War and the Failure of Industrial Mobilisation, 1899-1914' in Winter, Jay.M (ed) *War and Economic Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
- Trawin, Len *Early British quick-firing artillery: Field and Horse* (London: Nexus, 1997).
- Trew, Peter *The Boer War Generals* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999).

- Van Hartesveldt, Fred *The Boer War* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000).
- Van Thal, Herbert (ed) *The Prime Ministers Volume III* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1975).
- Verner, Willoughby *The Military Life of H.R.H George, Duke of Cambridge 2 Volumes* (London: John Murray, 1905).
- Walker, A (ed) *The Cambridge History of the British Empire: Volume VIII South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).
- Wantage, Baroness *Lord Wantage, V.C, K.C.B: A Memoir* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1907).
- Warner, Phillip *Dervish: The Rise and Fall of an African Empire* (London: Purnell Books, 1973).
- Warwick, Peter (ed) *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (London: Longmans, 1980).
- Wawro, Geoffrey *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France 1870-1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- Wessels, Andre *Lord Roberts and the War in South Africa 1899-1902* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000).
- Wheeler, Captain Owen *The War Office Past and Present* (London: Methuen and Co Ltd, 1914).
- White, Arnold *Efficiency and Empire* (London: Harvester Press, 1973).
- Wilson, K (ed) *The International Impact of the Boer War* (Chesham: Acumen, 2001).
- Williams, R *Defending the Empire: The Conservative Party and British Defence Policy 1899-1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).
- Woodward, David *Armies of the World* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd, 1978).

Articles

- Allen, Dan 'Boer War Field Orders' *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue 115 (December 2003).
- Bailes, Howard 'Patterns of thought in the Late Victorian Army' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 4 Part 1 (March 1981).
- 'Technology and Imperialism: a case study of the Victorian Army in Africa' *Victorian Studies Journal*, No 24 (1980).

- Barthorp, Michael 'Guardsman and Intelligencer: Lord Edward Gleichen' *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue 97 (June 1999).
- Beaver, William C 'The Intelligence Division Library 1854-1902' *Journal of Library History* 11/3 (July 1976).
- Beckett, Ian 'Edward Stanhope at the War Office 1887-1892' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 5 (1982).
- 'Personality and the Victorian Army; Some Reflections' *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue 100 (March 2000).
- 'The Indian Expeditionary Force on Malta and Cyprus 1878' *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue 76 (March 1994).
- 'The Pen and Sword: Reflections on Military Thought in the British Army 1854-1914' *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue 68 (March, 1992).
- 'The Stanhope Memorandum of 1888: A Reinterpretation' *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 57 (1984).
- 'Wolseley and the Ring' *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue 69, (June 1992).
- Bond, Brian 'The Late-Victorian Army' *History Today* (September 1961).
- 'Judgment in Military History' *Royal United Service Institute, Journal* (Spring 1989).
- 'Prelude to the Cardwell Reforms, 1856-68' *Royal United Service Institute, Journal* 106 (1961).
- 'Recruiting the Victorian Army 1870-1892' *Journal of Victorian Studies*. No5 (1961).
- 'The Effect of the Cardwell Reforms in Army Organisation 1874-1904' *Royal United Service Institute, Journal* 105 (1960).
- 'The Retirement of the Duke of Cambridge' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*. No106 (1961).
- Cooke, A.B. & Vincent, J.R. 'Lord Spencer and the Phoenix Park Murders' *Journal of Irish Historical Studies*, 18 (72) (1973).
- Corfe, T. H 'The Phoenix Park Murders' *History Today*, 11:12 (December 1961).

Darwin, J 'Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion', *English Historical Review*, 122, (1997).

Dawson R.N, Lieutenant A.T 'Modern Artillery' *Royal United Service Institution Journal*, No45 (1901).

Elliot, W. J 'The Military Intelligence Departments of England and Germany in Contrast' *Colburn's United Service Magazine*, (June 1885).

Ellison, Lt-General Sir Gerald 'Lord Roberts and the General Staff' *The Nineteenth Century and After* 112 (December 1932).

Escott, T. H. S 'Henry Brackenbury and his School' *Contemporary Review*, 105 (Jan/Jun 1914).

Griffiths, Major Arthur 'The War Office: Past, Present, and to Come' *Fortnightly Review* (April 1903).

Hall, Darrell 'Artillery in the Zulu War –1879' *South African Military History Society Journal* Vol4 No4 (December 1978).

— 'Artillery of the First Anglo-Boer War 1880-1881' *South African Military History Society Journal* Vol5 No2 (December 1980).

— 'Field Artillery of the British Army' Part III *South African Military History Society Journal*, Volume2 No6 (December 1973).

— 'Guns in South Africa' Parts III & VI *South African Military History Society Journal*, Vol2 No2 (December 1971).

— 'Guns in South Africa' Part I & II *South African Military History Society Journal* Vol2 No1 (June 1971).

— 'The Naval Guns in Natal 1899-1902' *South African Military History Society Journal* Vol4 No3 (June 1978).

Harvie, Ian 'A Very Dangerous Man: A Profile of Henry Brackenbury' *The Victorian Military Society Journal, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue 96 (March 1999).

— 'The Raid on Essaman, 14th October 1873' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 77, (1999).

Hughes, Major A.T. 'Field Artillery fire and Okehampton experiences' *Royal united Service Institution Journal*, No39 (1895).

May, Major E.S 'The Actions of Cavalry and Horse Artillery Illustrated by Modern Battles' *Royal United Service Institution Journal*, No38 (1894).

— 'The Analogy between the tactics of Field Artillery and those of the other arms'

- Royal United Service Institution Journal*, No40 (1896).
- McEldowney, John ‘Miscarriages of Justice? The Phoenix Park Murders 1882’ *Journal of Criminal Justice History*, 14 (1993).
- O’Brien, Jim ‘The Anglo-Boer war: Soap and Tinned Meat’ *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue No125 (June 2006).
- ‘The Second Anglo-Boer War: Getting there’ *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society Issue, Soldiers of the Queen*, No112 (March 2003).
- ‘Victoria’s Army: A brief overview of army organisation’ *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue119 & 120 (December 2004) & (March 2005).
- Owen, Major-General Charles, H ‘The Value of Artillery in the Field’ *Royal United Service Institute Journal* No33 (1888).
- Preston, Adrian ‘British Military Thought 1856-1890’ *Army Quarterly*, No89 (October, 1964).
- ‘Frustrated Great Gamesmanship: Sir Garnet Wolseley’s Plan for War against Russia, 1873-1880’ *International History Review*, No2 (1980).
- ‘Sir Garnet Wolseley and the Cyprus Expedition 1874’ *The Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Volume XLV (1967).
- ‘Wolseley, the Khartoum Relief Expedition and the Defence of India 1885-1900’ *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Volume 6 (May 1978).
- Robson, Brian ‘The Banda and Kirwi Prize Money’ *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue 97 (June 1999).
- Spiers, Edward. M ‘Rearming the Edwardian Artillery’ *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Volume 57 (1979).
- Walford, Lt-Colonel. N. L ‘The Development of Field Artillery Material’ *Royal United Service Institution Journal*, No35 (1891).
- ‘The Drill Regulations of the German Field Artillery’ *Royal United Service Institution Journal*, No 33 (1888).
- Webb, J.V ‘The Trouble in the 2nd Grenadier Guards in 1890’ *The Journal of the Victorian Military Society, Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue 95 (December 1998).

Unpublished dissertations

Bailes, Howard 'The Influence of Continental examples and Colonial Warfare upon the reforms of the Late Victorian Army' Unpublished PhD, University of London, 1980.

Kochanski, Halik 'Sir Garnet Wolseley and the reform of the British Army 1870-99' Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1996.

Mahaffey, Corrine. L 'Professionalisation in the British Army 1870-1914' PhD Thesis, Glasgow University, 2004.

Meriweather, Jeffrey L 'Procrastination or Pragmatism? British defence policy, War Office administration and the South African War 1898-1903' Mphil Thesis, University of Exeter, 2001.

Moon, H. R 'The Invasion of the United Kingdom: Public Controversy and Official Planning 1888-1918' Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1968.

Page, Andrew 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South Africa War 1899-1902' Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 1976.

Scales Jnr, Roberts. H 'Artillery in Small Wars: The evolution of British Artillery Doctrine 1860-1914' PhD Thesis, Duke University, 1976.

Spiers, Edward. M 'The Reform of the Front-line Forces of the Regular Army in the United Kingdom 1895-1914' Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1974.

¹ Except for his books, the works of Sir Henry Brackenbury have not been recorded in this bibliography. For a list of his publications see Appendix.